



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



FITZ OF
FITZ-FORD

MRS BRAY.





876
FRN

FITZ OF FITZ-FORD.



Frontispiece.

THE HISTORY OF THE

IN THE CITY OF

OF
THE CITY OF

THE CITY OF

THE CITY OF
THE CITY OF

FRN

FITZ OF FITZ-FORD.





Frontispiece.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



Frontispiece.

FITZ OF FITZ-FORD.

An Historical Romance,

BY

MRS. BRAY

NEW AND REVISED EDITION.

LONDON : CHAPMAN AND HALL,
LIMITED.

1884.

WESTMINSTER :
PRINTED BY NICHOLS AND SONS,
25, PARLIAMENT STREET.



FITZ OF FITZ-FORD.

INTRODUCTION.

Nor unsung
Be here the Tavy, mountain-born ! the theme
Of the old bard. The duteous river laves,
Fair Tavistock, thine abbey's mouldering walls,
And flows complaining by. O ye who dwell
Around yon ruins, guard the precious charge
From hands profane !

CARRINGTON.

It has of late been much the custom with writers who raise a superstructure of fiction on a foundation of truth to pretend that, for the narrative they lay before the public, they are indebted to some lucky chance ; such as finding a manuscript in an old chest, or amongst family papers in an ancient castle. In many instances has this ingenious mode of introduction been rendered so pleasing by the talent of the writer, that it has added materially to the interest of the work itself ; so that we become delighted by a double fiction.

In the present case, however, it is not necessary to resort to any fictitious mode of introduction. The tale of Fitz of Fitzford is founded in truth. And in order to satisfy the reader of this, and by what means the few but interesting facts connected with it became known to the writer of these pages, it will be advisable to give him, in the first instance, some account of the town and neighbourhood where the family of Fitz once flourished, and where their name is still mentioned with interest, as the traveller looks upon the ruined vestiges of their once splendid mansion.

The town of Tavistock, situated about fourteen miles from Plymouth, in a country abounding with the most varied and picturesque scenery, was once a place of considerable opulence, and famous for its costly abbey, originally erected by Orgar,

Earl of Devon. This was destroyed by the incursions of the Danes. But a second monastic edifice was afterwards erected, and the town once more became a place of importance. With the lover of poetry, as well as of history, it must ever be replete with interesting associations; since it was here that Elfrida triumphed in her prime over the heart of her youthful sovereign. And it was near this spot that Drake, who, in the language of a contemporary poet, may be said first to have placed "a girdle round about the earth," was born; and passed in obscurity the dawn of a life afterwards so glorious in the annals of our country. And though the humble remains of the house in which Drake spent his childhood have been unfortunately taken down, yet the quiet valley of Crowndale, where it stood, and the Tavy which wanders through it, just as it did at the hour of his birth, must ever be held as a sacred and endearing scene. Here too was born Browne the poet, and many other worthies whose names have long outlived the sculptured pomp of their tombs.

But as all things human are subject to decay and change, so it is with this interesting spot. Cromwel, Earl of Essex, demolished, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, a considerable part of the noble abbey. About a hundred years since, the Chapter-house was pulled down to make room for a private dwelling, which, by another change, is become a public one, for the accommodation of travellers; as their eyes will instantly inform them, by the sign of the Bedford Arms, which swings above the door. And, though the antiquary may deplore the change, and wish that in its stead the venerable Chapter-house had still maintained its ground, yet all such persons as business, or the desire of visiting the beauties of this neighbourhood, may bring to the spot, will find some consolation in the comforts of an excellent inn, and an obliging host and hostess. And there, too, may be seen a beautiful gothic portal, now converted into a dairy, a spacious room supposed to have been the refectory, and other portions of the monastic buildings.

The abbey church, which stood adjacent to that of the parish, is entirely destroyed, saving a solitary ruined arch, once the part of a tomb, that most probably was situated in a lateral chapel or cloister of the building. The parish church, though large and ancient, is not remarkable for beauty. In it may be seen the mausoleum of the family of Fitz. It contains also a fine monument of the Elizabethan age, with the effigies of Judge Glanville and his wife; both so characteristic, that no doubt can exist

of their being excellent likenesses of the deceased persons they represent. And as a further confirmation of it, I have often heard my husband say that he remembers, when a boy, his late father possessed an old portrait of Judge Glanville, in his scarlet robes, with a black cap on his head, which exactly resembled the effigy in the church; and that whenever a strolling company entered the town, and wanted a picture for the farce of "My Grandmother," or any other scenic exhibition in which a portrait was required, Judge Glanville was constantly lent to supply their want.

To return from this digression. The larger portion of the abbey walls, still adorned by their embattled summits, extend for a considerable space, on a raised causeway, along the banks of the river. These formed the boundary of the Abbot's grounds, and now those of the vicarage gardens; since within them his Grace the present Duke of Bedford has erected a handsome edifice for the use of the incumbent of Tavistock. Within the precincts of the vicarage, at the entrance next the town, stands a gothic arch, supported on either side by a polygonal tower overgrown with ivy, and decorated with wild flowers; it presents altogether such a subject as an artist would select for his pencil.

This archway was once a private entrance to the orchard and pleasure-grounds of the abbey. Ascending the dilapidated steps of one of its towers, you reach the top, whence may be seen a partial view of the town; the inn above named being a near object in the foreground. Here a busy imagination might find employment in conjuring up the black-hooded monks to people the now mouldering walls; only that such reveries, from the proximity of this tower to mine host's stables, stand a chance of being somewhat disturbed by the crack of the post-boy's whip, or a dialogue between the ostler and his cattle, given in the true accent of broad Devonshire. However, we have but to descend again the winding stairs, and the imagination need fear no interruption of her poetic mood, for here will be found food enough for cogitation beneath the vaulted arch, where lie scattered around, in not unplanned disorder, various fragments of gothic sculpture, broken pinnacles, mullions of old windows, with several heads of grim and gaping monsters, erst the ornaments of many a stately column.

A stone coffin, or sarcophagus, said to be Saxon, may also here be seen. Tradition declares it to be that which once contained the bones of Orgar, Earl of Devon, the founder of the

abbey. If this be true, either the bones must have been placed in it after exhumation, or Orgar must have been a dwarf; a thing which his bones contradict, since they are still shown, as the lion in the sexton's own keeping, within the church, and are of such magnitude that they might well have belonged to one of those giants which once walked the earth.

A portion of these sculptured fragments might, with the help of the antiquary's glass, be readily converted into a piscina, or basin for holy water. This is now partially covered with ivy, and receives the damp droppings of the roof, whose humidity cherishes the maiden-hair, the snap-dragon, and other wild flowers that grow between the groinings of the stones, and unite themselves with the pendant ivy that fantastically twines about the fragments of the gothic carvings. The archway bears a name, not however the most inviting for a tale of romance; since it is distinguished by the somewhat formidable appellation of "Betsy Grimal's Tower." For, "as the old tale goes," a woman of that name in former times was murdered on this spot. Her ghost is still averred to haunt it; though I confess I have never yet seen the apparition. But perhaps the country hours we keep may be the reason. For what ghost, except that of Mrs. Veal, was ever yet seen to wander before "the witching time of night when church-yards yawn."

Another portion of the ruined abbey, in the vicarage garden, which unites with the stupendous walls looking toward the river Tavy, is highly interesting. It is an ancient tower called the Still-house, beautifully hung with ivy, and having within it an upper and lower apartment, with their narrow round-headed windows. A door from the upper chamber gives egress to the battlements, whence the eye enjoys a beautiful prospect of the Tavy foaming and roaring beneath its picturesque bridge, and taking its course past the declivity of a gentle eminence on the opposite bank, adorned with many a noble tree. These ruins of the Abbey of Tavistock afford a sufficient indication of the former magnitude and consequence of its monastic foundation. And if I have somewhat dwelt upon the description of them, I trust the good-natured reader will make some allowance, since, whilst writing this in a room that looks directly on the ancient Still-house, richly hung with its mantle of ivy, a favourite object in my garden rambles, I cannot help pausing to pay a just tribute to so venerable an acquaintance.

Tavistock was formerly a corporate town, but, like other places,

it has seen many changes, and has felt the ups and downs in the fortunes of this world ; being, at one remote period, so poor, that it was actually disfranchised at the petition of the inhabitants, because it could not afford to return, and support, members for Parliament. And, as a curious contrast of the poverty of the church at that period, to its opulence in the days of its mitred abbots, I may also state that the late Mr. Bray found a document in the church chest which contained a petition from the vicar to the parish for a pair of shoes. Yet the trade of this place was once so thriving, and its woollen manufacture so famous, that in London none of that description of cloth was held excellent unless it bore the name of Tavistock kersey. And it ought not to be forgotten that here too was a Saxon school, where that ancient language was taught when almost forgotten in every other part of England. And one of the first books ever printed in this kingdom was a Saxon grammar, at the "exempt monastery of Tavystoke."

To the west of the town, by the side of the new road to Plymouth, stand the ruins of the gateway of Fitz-ford, which, except an old barn, is all that now remains of the mansion and offices of the family of Fitz. This gateway is spacious, and the label ornaments of its architecture proclaim it to be a structure of the time of Henry the Seventh. Such portions of the carving as appear through the ivy, with which it is amply hung, are well sculptured ; and the whole might form an interesting subject for the pencil of a Harding or a Prout. The ancient mansion of Fitzford, that once stood in an open court beyond this gatehouse, was many years since pulled down, and the materials used to erect the present market-house in the town.

It was a summer evening when, in company with Mr. Bray, I first visited this ancient gateway. And as we passed along he related to me the various anecdotes, respecting the place of his birth, that I have mentioned above. But he more particularly drew my attention to Fitz-ford, as he told me tradition had peopled even the solitary gateway, now in ruins, with the restless spirits of the invisible world ; that strange forms were said to be there seen ; and that one of these was of a truly German character : since a Lady Howard, famed in her life-time for some great offence, was now nightly doomed, as a penance, to follow her hound which was compelled to run from Fitz-ford to Oakhampton Park between midnight and cock-crowing, and to return with a single blade of grass in its mouth ; a punishment from which neither the mistress nor the hound could be released

till every blade was consumed. I laughed at this wild tradition. And Mr. Bray then told me that there were other and more probable traditions, supported by the evidence of history, connected with this gateway at Fitz-ford, which in early life had much interested his imagination. My curiosity was strongly excited ; and, whilst viewing the only vestige of their once magnificent dwelling it may be supposed that I listened with deep interest to the few, but remarkable, facts he related to me of the family of Fitz. He also told me that, having had at one period of his life the idea of writing a history of his native town, he had made some memoranda of the interesting traditions of the place, as well as collected materials of a more historical description. And I here, perhaps, may be allowed to state that he had explored every deep valley and romantic tor of the western parts of Dartmoor, investigating the druidical remains there still existing, accompanying his written accounts of the neighbourhood with a number of sketches, and had frequently indulged his fancy in many a little poem, inspired by the romantic objects around him.

On our return from Fitz-ford he placed his manuscript in my hands. And as I found much of it so intimately connected with, or descriptive of, some of the most striking scenes in this vicinity, we determined to visit them together. The possession of a quiet pony rendered the plan practicable, as it enabled me to ascend the mountainous heights and tors without the danger of breaking my neck ; and I could with equal safety explore the wild valleys and deep glens that lie hidden, as it were, from the traveller, who is content merely to follow the high road, and, by so doing, may pass along a country teeming with the most romantic beauties, without even suspecting that he is within gun-shot of a valley, a wood, and a waterfall such as Lydford, or an Alpine village like Peter Tavy ; both but solitary instances of those numberless scenes of beauty that here abound, and that cannot fail to delight both the poet and the painter.

After, therefore, having visited, with the advantages of such a guide, the tors of Dartmoor, the beautiful woods and vales of the Tavy and the Tamar, and many other scenes, all more or less connected with the subject that had so much interested my imagination, I determined to indulge it, and to give the reader, in the form of a narrative, the legend of Devon respecting Fitz of Fitz-ford.

A. E. B.

*The Vicarage, Tavistock, Devon,
October 18th, 1828.*

FITZ OF FITZ-FORD.

CHAPTER I.

On the very edge
Of the vast moorland, startling every eye,
A shape enormous rises! High it towers
Above the hill's bold brow, and, seen from far,
Assumes the human form—a granite god!
CARRINGTON.

TOWARDS the western limits of the county of Devon is situated that vast waste of land known in ancient times as the Forest of Dartmoor, and still recognised under that appellation in all deeds and grants of the Duchy of Cornwall.

Within the last few years Dartmoor has been gradually becoming a subject of inquiry with the traveller and the tourist; and certainly a more interesting spot to gratify the antiquary, or the lover of the picturesque in its wildest forms, could scarcely be found. This immense tract of land is characterised by mountainous and rugged heights, whose bare and stupendous declivities are studded with such innumerable masses of granite, which forms indeed the basis of nearly the whole moor, that were all the cities of Europe built from their blocks it would scarcely exhaust them.

Upon the very summit of most of these heights arise, with peculiar grandeur, those fabrics of nature's own construction, the tors of Dartmoor. By some geologists they are supposed to be the product of volcanic fusion. They chiefly consist of solid granite, piled mass upon mass, in horizontal strata: some portion of dark iron-stone is found amongst them, and so gigantic are many of these piles that when viewed in twilight, or through the veil of mist (as the clouds, with which they are frequently crowned, break asunder), they might easily be mistaken for the



Frontispiece.

12/2/84

Downloaded from

12/2/84

12/2/84

never be mistaken ; so marked and so peculiar are the characteristic features of that nation, before whom Heaven has placed special blessings and curses. There were the hooked nose, the bright black eye, with the cautious and quick glance in its expression, the raised eyebrow, and the compressed mouth, so marked in the Jew ; though the latter feature was but imperfectly seen through the long and flowing beard that fell upon his breast.

The rider who followed this descendant of Israel was a youth of his own people, light, small, and active in his appearance, with as knavish a cast of countenance as any youngster of his tribe who now importunes the passenger to purchase Dutch sealing-wax manufactured in London, or rotten black-lead pencils, within the purlieus of the Royal Exchange.

For some time the two riders continued their journey, without other attempts at speech than an occasional ejaculatory address to the animals they bestrode, accompanied by many a good blow bestowed by the younger upon his own beast, which grew tardy as the ascent grew steeper ; till the elder rider observing the contest, turned round, and said in a tone of admonition, " Benjamin, dismount ; spare the beast such hard blows ; dismount, I say, and walk thyself up the hill. The ass will be sore laden anon with a grievous burthen ; spare him therefore now, that his strength may not fail him in the hour of need ; and remember, Benjamin, the merciful man is merciful to his beast."

" I wish, then," answered Benjamin, somewhat pertly, " that you, Master Levi, would think me a beast, and that I might find some mercy at your hands, for there is not a hireling amongst the Nazarenes that is worked as you work me. All yesterday was I out upon the watch in this wilderness of desolation, to look for what I could not find, till I was drenched to the skin in such a rain, that, but for the bow of the covenant, which rested like the ark on the summit of Brent Tor, I should have thought the flood was come again. And scarcely had I got housed at home, and taken but small food and smaller rest, when I am turned out again to follow you after a traffic, of which I know little except that it is unlawful, and lies among the Christian dogs."

" Have I not told you, Benjamin," said Levi, " that there is a great necessity for these labours, and that they shall be to thy profit, youth, as well as mine ? Hold thy peace then, murmurer. But thus it is ever ; the ungrateful servant rails

against the ruler, even as the children of Israel railed against Moses as he led them through the wilderness; the water came not at the moment to refresh them, so they thought it would not come at all; patience is the parent of thrift. And unlawful you call this traffic! The law binds us to our own people; but not to the Moabite, the Amorite, or to those who are the enemies of the true God. You say these men we are about to seek are Christian; but I tell you they are no more Christian than Jew. They know of no God but that for which they seek in the very bowels of the earth, and even that they do by stealth, defying the law of their own people, and making a mock of rulers. I tell thee, little Benjamin, they dig, and toil, and sweat, to glut their villany, and would sell their very souls for a handful of gold and silver."

"You have often told me so before," said Benjamin, "and yet they are sought by you as your favoured people."

"You must be cautious how you deal with them," continued Levi, without heeding this interruption, "or even how you speak with them; for they are a desperate race, and would use any weapon afforded them by their adversaries, as David did the sword of Goliath against its master, on the smallest cause of provocation."

"Then why do you send me out alone, as you did yesterday, to look for the chief among them?" said Benjamin. "You promised my father, Absalom, when you took me to your service, as he was about departing to sleep with his fathers, that I should be cared for in health, life, and limb, and have rest from my toil in due season."

"And have I not cared for you even as for myself?" answered Levi; "do I not peril my own life more than thine? Have you not rest? Have you not the Sabbath-day, and the feasts of the Passover—of Tabernacles, Trumpets, and New Moons? Are not these rests? And the rests appointed for the children of God? When thou didst drudge in the great city of iniquities, did the flat-caps of London spare thee? Did they not buffet, and spurn, and kick at thee as the wretched Jew boy? But dismount, thou foolish churl, and I will do the same, to ease our beasts as they toil up these stony places, and I will shew thee that if thou art wise and faithful, the things that I do shall lead to thy profit as well as mine; for thou art of mine own seed, the son of the first-born of our house, and as I promised to Absalom, so will I do to thee. Dismount I say, and thou

shalt hear all, for the hour is come to trust thee, and that fully."

Little Benjamin, who longed to be acquainted with all the particulars concerning his uncle's mysterious traffic, and whose curiosity had long been excited to hear the communication often promised, and as often delayed, instantly dismounted, and uncle and nephew leading their asses, which seemed well content to be relieved of their burthen, by the bridle, slowly ascended the steep together, as Levi thus pursued his discourse.

"Benjamin," said he, "thou art young; seventeen summers have scarce passed over thy head, and before I would trust thee, I was willing to prove if thou wast worthy and prudent. And though thou art somewhat given to murmur at thy toils, yet I have found thee faithful—keep a close tongue still, Benjamin, for what I have to say must be for no ear save thine own."

"Master Levi," replied the nephew, "there is little danger of my betraying your counsel, since, should you turn me adrift on the wide world, I have no other prospect but starvation; the London service I did with the fat city Nazarenes in Cheap having cured me of all desire to serve a people who used me worse than I would use my beast, though he be the most obstinate of his kind that ever bore crook.*"

"My own life has been one of crosses and cares," continued Levi. "In the days of the woman called Mary, sometime Queen of England, who offered, as the idolaters did of old, to Moloch, the sacrifices of human blood by fire, I, and many of our race, fled the land. I had lost all my well-earned gains by persecution; and though I fled from the bondage of Egypt, I had still to wander through the wilderness of tribulation, till I found a way to gain a livelihood by the sweat of my brow amongst the workers in the bowels of the earth in Germany. I had a quick eye, Benjamin, a ready wit, and a hand that never turned back from the toil; so that I became skilled in the knowledge of all metals, and of the certain signs and assurances to find them. I throve and did well, till on a time, in the hope of making a good venture in a more settled course of life, I passed into Flanders, where I grew in riches as a merchant, and mighty in esteem with my own people."

"And yet you tarried not there, uncle," said Benjamin.

* The crook here alluded to is peculiar to Devon. It is formed of wood, and used in the place of panniers. Its appearance is highly picturesque. The load sometimes carried on these crooks is immense.

"No," replied Levi, "for envy follows good, even as the shadow does the body that walks before the beams of the great light. Under the pretext of persecuting me for my religion, but in reality to find occasion to seize on my wealth, that accursed Duke Alva threw me into prison in the strong-walled city of Tournay. There I should have perished, but that I had learnt the art to burrow in the earth, like a fox that makes his passage unsuspected, beneath these mighty rocks. I had secured one implement of my old vocation ; and with that I worked me a way, by toiling day and night, and so escaped from my dungeon at a time when a public uproar in the city favoured it. As I journeyed towards the coast, I begged for sustenance ; and when men would have cursed me for a Jew, I told them of Alva's cruelty ; and the hatred in which they held that man caused them, for very spite to him, to throw me a portion from their tables. At length I reached the coast, where, learning that the lady Elizabeth, now Queen of England, being desirous to improve the art of working mines in these western parts, had freely invited over into her country all such as had practised the craft in Germany, with large promises of reward to those who were most skilled, I offered my services to her man of business who came to seek the workers, and was accepted. My being a follower of the law of Moses, and not of the law of the Gentiles, was winked at for the sake of my cunning in the art of mining. I came to England, and how think you, Benjamin, I then fared?"

"Why, I suppose, uncle," said the youth, "as you were so skilled in the craft, that you gained the recompense of your reward."

"I will tell you what I gained, Benjamin," continued Levi, with considerable warmth of expression, "I gained a cause for cursing—and, whilst I breathe, it shall never cease, but I will curse the traitors—I was fawned upon, flattered, paid, pampered, and upheld as a wise man in Israel, a very Solomon in my calling, till they gained from me so much knowledge of my art that they could enrich themselves ten-fold : and then, simply thinking I had taught them all I knew, they scorned me, accused me of false dealing, when, so help me holy Father Abraham ! I had dealt with them as truly for my hire as Jacob did with Laban when he did seven years' service for Rachel. But I have vowed a vow unto the God of Jacob, and I will keep it, to repay upon this people the wrongs they have heaped upon my head."

"But for what cause could they so falsely accuse you, uncle?"

inquired Benjamin, "what good could it do them so to use you?"

"Some one amongst their own people, who was greatly trusted," continued Levi, "had acted dishonestly; and, in order to screen himself, charged me with the offence. The Jew found ready credit as a thief, and was made the scapegoat of the tribe. The sins of the people were laid upon his head.—I fled, to save myself from the malice of mine enemies, and for a time took shelter with some bold men who had once been miners, till, for rebellion against their rulers, they became outlawed by the sentence of their own Stannary courts. These miserable men used me better than my faithless masters, since they did not flatter me to ruin me. They made me bear the burthen of the day; but they gave me the bread I required to supply my wants."

"And why did you leave them, uncle?" said the nephew.

"I have not left them," replied Levi; "I have only left to dwell with them. But I am still the broker and the chief agent of their secret traffic—you shall hear my motive. The enemy who I feared would attempt my life to screen his own misdeeds died, and then we judged it safer, and better for our purposes, that I should openly inhabit the town, since, by appearing not to fear a public inquiry into my way of life, men would be deceived to think it lawful. I dwell therefore in Tavistock, and follow publicly a simple calling, whilst I manage such matters for these people as they could not do for themselves. Before I had been driven from the service of the crown mines, I had long suspected, by sure signs, that, in a certain spot of this country there was a vein of silver ore,* and having already proved these outlawed miners, I taught them how to work the lode by stealth, showing them the treasure but in part, and slowly guiding them on to their task, so that they cannot do without me; and as they dare not sell the ore in this country, since by law it pertains to the queen, I, who have the use of many tongues, and a knowledge of the foreign marts, deal for them with the captains of certain foreign vessels that beat about the coast, receiving a just proportion of the profits as a guerdon for my own labours."

* The silver mines of Devon were once celebrated, and of such profit that they greatly assisted Edward III. to carry on his wars against France. In the time of Elizabeth, several veins were discovered. A splendid cup, weighing 137 ounces, made from the silver of Coomb-martin mines, in the north of Devon, was presented to the city of London by Sir Francis Bulmer.

"But perhaps, uncle," said Benjamin, "these outlawed workers may do by you as did your first employers; they may cast you out when they no longer want your help, and so give you up to the queen's justice."

"They cannot—they dare not do it," exclaimed Levi; "I have learnt by experience, boy, the way of this world's iniquity—I have not pointed out to them where all the treasure lies, and besides this it is I who prepare the ore in ingots for the market. They gain but little of it at a time, as all is done by stealth therefore they work slowly—and as to betraying me to rulers, they are outlawed themselves. There is not one amongst them, but should he venture within an English court his life would be forfeited. Still, I grant they are violent and dangerous, but not in the way you suspect. They have no rule of life but their own wants and interests; and those they satisfy by any means. They have no law but that of the beasts which war together—the strongest overcome the weakest. And they have no conscience but that of passion—a quarrel, a stab, and a dead man, follow hard upon each other."

"Then, Master Levi," said Benjamin, "it is surely full of danger that you should trust yourself amongst them. What could you do unarmed, if the strong man you now seek should turn upon you?"

"I trust them in nothing without due caution, Benjamin," replied his uncle; "and I am as Joshua was of old, something of a man of war. I know the use of the sword, the dagger, and of the black powder that turns into flame on the slightest spark from the flint. Look at me; am I unprepared?" As he spoke he drew aside the garment that covered his breast, where (though concealed from observation by the thick folds of his gown) appeared, well secured in a broad leather belt, a short but stout dagger, with a formidable brace of pistols.

"I am not the man, Benjamin," continued Levi, "to shed man's blood without a cause; but I have a hand that will not flinch if necessity render it lawful. And if once these people give me cause to suspect them of treachery, I am not as the fool, that will suffer the viper to bite him twice; I would crush the reptile at once upon the head."

"But the chief of these people, uncle," said the nephew, "I thought you told me before now, was not a miner, but a man of more civil breeding, and of better knowledge than the rest. What is he?"

"What he is, the God of Abraham, who seeth the thoughts of man, can alone tell," replied Levi. "It is certain he is not a miner, for he knows nothing of the craft; and wherefore these men choose him for a leader I can scarcely tell you; except it be that the children of the old Serpent would be led by Satan himself and none other. This man is of a more civil breeding, it is true, for he hath the learning of an elder in his own profane way; but, for manners, I wot he is as rude as the rest: as rude as these mountain winds that visit the wild rocks. He is bold, yet cunning; wary as the earth-grubbing fox, but cruel as the wolf that watches, when the mastiff sleeps, to rifle the fold—and for such properties 'tis like enough these men should have chosen him for a leader, since, though they are ferocious in themselves, they have scarce wit enough to guide the bark of their piracy without an able pilot at the helm."

"By the terror of Pharaoh," said Benjamin, "I almost fear to meet this man when I hear you relate such things of him. But, look, yonder stands Vixen Tor, the place of our destination."

"The red light streams upon it," said Levi; "it rises like the monument of Rachel in the plains of Bethlehem, mighty and alone."

The object which the travellers now approached was one of the most striking throughout the whole of the moor, being a vast granite pile, consisting of three lofty masses, above one hundred feet in height, standing isolated on an extensive declivity, which, when viewed at a little distance, seem but one solid body, vast, rugged, and of a form so peculiar that it is not improbable this august work of nature's hand might have been selected as a rock-idol of the Druids, who once consecrated so many of the tors of Dartmoor to the ceremonies of their priesthood. Vixen Tor in its form has been aptly compared to the Sphinx,* and the abrupt heights, by which it is surrounded in various directions, to those "rocks amidst the flood of years," the pyramids of Egypt. The scene was at once wild and desolate, but full of grandeur.

* This comparison was made by the Rev. E. A. Bray, in his MS. survey of the western limits of Dartmoor, in 1810, when, in company with a friend, he managed to ascend to the very summit of Vixen Tor, through a natural fissure of the rock, and discovered on the top three basins cut in the solid granite. Mr. Burt, in his notes on Carrington's beautiful poem of Dartmoor, has lately made the same comparison.

In the foreground appeared a rugged mound thickly strewed with rough stones and heath, yet with no object of sufficient magnitude to interrupt the view of the dark tor, or to lessen its claim to solitary pre-eminence. But if viewed from the south-east, the abrupt fall of the land upon which it stands gives it a new character; and there Vixen Tor assumes the form of an ancient castle of stupendous construction, towering above the valley of the Walkham, that lies as it were sleeping in beauty far, far below its base. The river winds its rapid course through this vale of enchantment, amidst woods that hang in rich profusion down to the very verge of its banks, strewed with rocks, over which the waters break in white foam; and on the opposite side, the bold acclivities that form the boundary of the valley appear interspersed here and there with cottages, their blue smoke curling up, and relieving by contrast the deep green foliage of the woods, whilst they indicate, as do also the patches of cultivation in their little gardens, that this spot, on the skirts of the moor, shares not its barren nor unsocial character.

From the direction, however, in which Levi and Benjamin advanced towards the tor, it appeared to them in that view we have first described, as a dark and solitary pile. In a moment its face seemed to change: for the clouds, that hung in a dense mass above, parted asunder; and a full flood of the morning light suddenly streamed upon the rock, and rendered it so brilliant as to shew every broken fissure of its surface, and the white lichen growing thick upon its sides.

Levi, whose mind was by no means insensible to the grandeur of nature, was impressed by the scene with a sense of awe and veneration; and the old man exclaimed, in the language of Scripture, as he raised his hand and eyes towards heaven, "How fearful is this place! This is none other but the house of God! It is as the altar of unhewn stone that Jacob raised to the God of Israel."

"Uncle, uncle!" exclaimed Benjamin, and he drew near Levi with considerable perturbation as he spoke, "is not yonder figure the man we seek? I see his corslet glitter in the sun."

"Have you the bags ready for the silver?" said Levi, whose mind was instantly recalled from its images of grandeur and veneration by the slightest circumstance that referred to his worldly traffic, "Have you the bags? for we will not tarry long with yonder Goliath—Go on boy, to the tor."

"No, uncle Levi," replied Benjamin, as he turned the ass

upon which he now rode, after having remounted, so as to follow in the rear of Levi, "I will not go forward before you. To give place to the elder is a duty of our people; and that youth is foolish who forgets to honour age, as you have often told me yourself."

"You fear to go forward, Benjamin," said Levi. "You have the heart, Benjamin, of a little mouse, that fears the domestic cat though she be sleeping on the lap of the maidens. But come on youth, and never fear, for yonder man will not hurt you. He comes to me in peace, even as doth the lion of the desert that bows down before his keeper."

CHAPTER II.

I know thee well,
But in thy fortunes am unlearned and strange.
SHAKSPEARE.

THEY now advanced to the tor, and joined the man, the very idea of whom had struck such a panic into the heart of the little city-bred follower of Israel. Levi and the youth dismounted. Let us imagine the place and the group.

The morning light tinged with gold the summit of every surrounding eminence, though the mists, or clouds, yet hung about them, and the more distant heights were faintly seen in the background melting into the purple ether of early day. Upon a projecting portion of Vixen Tor, under the thousand fantastic forms and hues of its superincumbent rocks, was seated a man, about fifty years old, of a countenance strongly marked, but so regular in every feature, that in youth it must have possessed the highest claims to manly beauty. An unsettled and wandering life, and probably the change of many climates, had dyed it of the deepest brown; so that there was little, if any, difference of its complexion from that of the swarthy natives of an Eastern country. His eye was black, and full of fire, yet it was often cast upon the ground. His beard was of a rich brown, full and curly, without one hair changed by time and toil; his figure, tall, well-formed, and athletic. Upon his breast he wore a steel corslet, somewhat tarnished; and the bare arms, which were crossed upon it, large, sinewy, and dark, looked as if they were as hard as the very steel

upon which they pressed. His legs also were bare, covered with hair, and brawny; a short and light boot of leather, that scarcely reached above the ankle, being the only covering of the feet.

He wore upon his head a morion, or steel cap, with a single black feather drooping towards the shoulder. A rusty cloak lined with fur, and of foreign fashion, hung across his back. A brace of pistols, a short knife, and a sword, the whole secured about the middle with a leather belt, completed the figure we have endeavoured to describe: though we should vainly attempt to portray a countenance so marked and so expressive, that it was at once capable of exciting feelings of terror, awe, and admiration, since there was nothing about it that gave the idea of the vulgar and low-bred marauder.

Levi bent before him, leaning upon his riding staff, his long grey beard and black gown waving in the wind, which blew bleakly on the moor, and visiting the rock in its passage, made it murmur and echo as it were to its shrill tones. Levi's large hat served as a pent-house to his brows; so that, from under its projecting shade, he could observe the countenance and manner of the person he addressed with cautious attention.

Close behind Levi stood little Benjamin. At first something dashed and fearful, but gaining assurance by the quiet position in which the person we have described was seated, Benjamin's raised brow, full-opened eyes, and half-gaping mouth, seemed to speak the wonder with which he satisfied his curiosity. The two asses, turned loose near the spot, and peacefully grazing on the pasture, heath, and thistles, that grew between the large fragments of stone scattered about, complete the picture, which we doubt not the imagination of many of our readers will much better be able to fill up than our pen to describe.

"A good morrow to you, Captain Standwich," said the Jew; "are you alone?" he continued, as he cast his eye cautiously around.

"No," replied the armed figure somewhat roughly, "I am not alone whilst you are here. And when you are absent I have as bad company—my own thoughts."

"And why came you not yesterday at the appointed time and place, Captain Standwich?" continued the Jew; "not finding you, as I expected, I sent the boy out to look for you on the moor, at your old harbour; but he saw nothing save the clouds that wetted him to the skin. Why came you not?"

"I could not come," replied Standwich; "the hawks are

abroad. I have passed the night amidst the wilds of Wistman's wood. For the present we have all left our old station ; henceforth you must seek our people at the cave. I dare not remain longer openly with them ; I am so beset on every side. But I have devised the means to provide for my own safety."

"And what means are those?" inquired the Jew. "Speak plainly your purpose, for I cannot read riddles."

"And what is my purpose to you?" said the outlaw, in an angry voice, as he raised his head, and looked sternly upon Levi; at the same time remarking that little Benjamin drew still nearer, and seemed to listen with curiosity to what was going forward; "how dare you," continued Standwich, "bring that boy with you, and seek to learn my purpose, whilst he stands at your elbow to hear our conference?"

"The lad is my own lad," replied Levi. "It is the boy Benjamin, of whom I told you but now; and he will not give ear to what does not concern him."

"He shall not, he dare not," exclaimed Standwich, and without another word the outlawed leader suddenly started up, caught Benjamin by the collar of his gown, and giving him a violent shake, sent him reeling some paces backward. "Begone, fool!" cried Standwich, "nor dare to listen to our conference."

Benjamin apparently had no desire to do so after this rough injunction; for he retreated, as fast as his legs could carry him, to a distance far more than necessary to be out of earshot. "Captain Standwich," said Levi, "I would entreat you to forbear this violence. For my own sake, as well as yours, believe me that I should not bring hither any one likely to prejudice our affairs. The lad is dependent on me, and for his very life dare not utter what I command him to keep secret; besides that he is prudent, has a close tongue, and being somewhat a timid child, would seek nothing but the paths of peace and silence."

"But his father?" said Standwich.

"Is gathered to his people," replied Levi. "He is dead in the body, though his spirit be alive in Sheol, for I will warrant me that Absalom hath no part in the Gehenna of the damned. So I would beg of you, Captain Standwich, to speak the youth fairly, and he will never harm you or yours."

Standwich looked contemptuously upon the Jew; "Well, well," said he, "I care not whom you bring, for your life is as forfeited as mine, and for that very cause I stoop to use you, a cursed Jew, whose very step pollutes the earth he treads upon."

"Your Christian creeds," said Levi, "agree in the sin of hatred against the persecuted people of Israel. But come, George Standwich, we will not begin our work this morning with upbraidings, you are in a bad humour to-day. Let us speak of the silver, and that is a point in which Jew and Christian both agree; and no man cavils at the faith of him who keeps the day of payment."

"I have brought none to-day," said Standwich; "have I not told you I am beset with dangers? Our people have silver in store ready for you, but we dare not remove it, and in consequence of these perils some amongst us are in great necessity; they have scarcely food. But that want must be supplied by the fallow deer from Fitz Park. To-night will relieve their owner from more than one forked head of his herd."

"You had best beware of that work, George Standwich," said Levi; "the park-keeper is on the look-out, and young John Fitz, as I hear, and Sir Nicholas Slanning, have sworn to quell the first man that they find deer-stalking in the old knight's woods."

"Let them attempt it," said Standwich, "and the vault of that oppressive house shall hold one more of a family, which you, Levi, as well as I, would willingly see destroyed. There the Jew and the Christian agree, I grant you. Sir Hugh Fitz has injured you as much as he has our people."

"He hath, he hath," cried Levi; "for in the time of that cruel woman Mary, it was Sir Hugh Fitz who first began my ruin. He used his turns and his quibbles of the law to bear down the poor Jew, in a suit that I had in the courts, till I was obliged to fly the country, else should I have perished at the stake, or from worldly want; and that man ——"

"Is now an apostate," cried Standwich, "the Julian of these days—the base, truckling hireling of a court. It is to him I owe my present danger. Hear me, Levi. Sir Hugh Fitz has been busy, first to ruin us, and then to drive us to desperation; and now he has set a strong power upon us. In consequence of his information, Sir Richard Esdale, the governor of Lydford Castle, has so harassed and alarmed our people that we have been compelled to desert the glen of Lydford. We are scattered abroad, with no place of safety but the cave. There are lodged the few women and the helpless who belong to the outlawed miners. Great is their distress; and I learnt last night that an hundred marks is set upon my head."

"This is bad news indeed!" said Levi. "But why do not you, who have no tie amongst these people, take advantage of some one of those foreign vessels that touch upon our coast, and for the present fly these parts?"

"What!" cried Standwich, "to starve, or perish, where I have no followers, no supporters?"

"Well, captain," said Levi, "you are a man of mystery. And thus much I will say of you, that though you have often reviled me with the tongue, yet you have done me service at my need. Is there aught I can do to help you in your present strait? And where must I seek the silver ore? The vessel that is to convey it away lies off the coast. A boat is in readiness to carry it safely down the Tamar to lodge it on ship-board. The master has the means of payment, could we but get the ore safely stowed. Where is it lodged?"

"You must seek the cave of the *Virtuous Lady*," said Standwich; "Betsy Grimal has instructions how to deal with you."

"What! must I seek that witch of Endor?" cried Levi. "The passions of your men I dare meet, for they are not turned to wrath without a cause—and wrath may be turned away by a smooth word; but the dark malice of that woman I fear is deadly."

"Bring her the price of the silver ore," said Standwich, "and she will be satisfied. She is trusted by her companions, and with them she deals justly; you have more cause to fear Sir Richard Esdale. Should he fall within your power, Levi, rid us of him at once, and you will do us a service that shall not go unrequited."

"Captain," said Levi, "that is your trade; to kill men in the dark is not mine."

No sooner had Levi uttered these words than a fierce angry glance flashed from the expressive eyes of the person he addressed. He put his hand upon the hilt of his sword, and trembled with emotion, but the next moment, as if recollecting himself, Standwich dropped his hand, and said in a subdued tone, "you are a fool, and so am I to think you other; you would destroy our enemies, but dare not do it."

"I would destroy them," replied Levi, "but not by violent means—for the blood of man shall be required of man; and what says Solomon? 'Surely the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood, so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth death.'"

"Levi," said Standwich, "I came hither to-day in part to tell you of these things. But that was not the sole cause of my desiring to meet you. I may rest under your roof, perhaps, to-morrow night."

"Rest under my roof!" exclaimed the Jew, in a tone of mingled fear and astonishment; "holy father Abraham, are you mad, to think of it! It would be a greater hazard than that of the spies who committed themselves to rest under the roof of Rahab the harlot. For surely every man in the town will be upon you, and they will rise up and shut their gates to secure you."

"I will risk that," said Standwich, "though it is in part to secure my own safety that I shall on the morrow seek the town. I shall not come to you thus clad in steel. Of one thing I warn you, that though you will know me, I bid you beware how you point me out to yonder foolish boy."

"But the lad hath eyes, the lad hath ears," said the Jew, "and this day he hath both seen the features of thy face and heard the accents of thy tongue. How can I then bid him not to know thee?"

"But he will not, unless you betray me to him," replied Standwich; "obey my directions, and he cannot. I shall lodge with you for the night; you must receive me—you dare not refuse me. Remember, Levi, that, wretched Jew as you are, it was I who saved your life. It was I who, before I last left England, warned you of the plot formed to ruin you, when you were engaged with your old and treacherous masters."

"I know it," answered Levi; "and the wretched Jew, as you call him, has one virtue not always found to dwell in the heart of the Christian. He can be grateful, even as David was grateful to Jonathan when he bid him flee from the wrath of Saul. I will lodge you, since you are mad enough to desire it, and the life you once preserved shall be risked to guard yours!"

"Enough of this," said the outlaw; "one word more and I depart; you must do me yet another service, and that without delay."

"Speak it," cried Levi, "and if he be at danger of neither life nor limb I will do it."

"You must bear this letter," continued Standwich, as he took one from out a little pocket in his cloak, "to Margaret Champnour, and contrive to deliver it to her in private."

"Holy Isaac!" exclaimed the Jew, with an air of the utmost

amazement in his countenance, "What, are you gone mad to-day, Captain Standwich, or are you in your sober senses? You! you send a letter to Mistress Margery Champernoun, the fair young ward of Judge Glanville! and for me, too, to become the bearer! I would ask you to explain this if the affair concerned me, but you are in all things a man of mystery."

"Will you not then do me this service?" said Standwich; "if you refuse, I must find another messenger."

"I will not," answered Levi; "to lodge you is full of danger, but to do this service were mere madness; it were a voluntary thrusting myself into the den of lions."

"Then will you do thus much for me, in the event of my not finding a messenger who may do my errand in safety?" said Standwich; "will you, if you can gain speech of Margaret Champernoun, tell her May morning is at hand, and she shall on that day see one she most desires, yet least expects to see? She will understand you."

"It is a dark saying," cried Levi, as he shook his head with an air of doubt; "but the matter is not mine. If I can gain the ear of the damsel, though I see no chance of such a thing, I will say as much to her. From whom must I tell her I come?"

"From a wanderer through the paths of penitence," replied Standwich.

The Jew again looked surprised; and could not suppress the smile that curled his lip, as he looked keenly upon the Captain from out the corners of his eyes, and said, "With our people, the breakers of the law begin their penitence by a keeping of the law; but this, I trow, is not of your Christian creed of penitence. Well, if I can do thus much for you, I will, though I dare not bear about with me, or deliver, that written paper; it were too perilous."

"It is enough," said Standwich; "to-morrow evening at dusk, I shall stand before your door to take shelter for the night. Before the next dawn of day I may quit you, so remember to say nothing to yonder simpleton. If he sees me, he may not know me but as a stranger."

"The boy Benjamin shall know nothing from me," replied Levi; "but he is not so dull as you apprehend him to be. Nevertheless, it is like enough that the tabor and the pipes, and the May games of the youths and the maidens, will keep him abroad, and make him too busy to be curious. I will do my

best to shelter you, and I trust no ill will come of it to you or me."

"Fear not," said Standwich, "and now depart, return as quickly as you may with the boy. The sun is full risen, and looks abroad with all his light. I must no longer rest here. I must be busy to-day, for to-morrow hath its own especial business. Remember, the silver ore lies in the cave of the Abbot's weir, near the Virtuous Lady. There you must seek it at a convenient time."

"I will look to it," answered Levi; "and now farewell, Captain Standwich."

The outlaw waved his hand, drew his cloak around him, passed hastily behind the rock, and, striking down the steep declivity that led towards the wild and intricate valley of the Walkham, was soon out of sight. Levi speedily called Benjamin to advance. They remounted their asses; the first much disappointed in being obliged to return without obtaining the precious ore that had formed the object of his excursion, and greatly wondering in his own mind at the mysterious character and conduct of Standwich.

Benjamin, whose terror had been raised even by a slight glance at the muscular, armed, and imposing figure of the outlaw, ever and anon, as they journeyed onward, kept looking back, fearing he knew not what: nor did he find either his courage or the free use of his tongue till his uncle and himself began to descend from the mountainous regions of Dartmoor; when the sight of the road that led to the town, and the town itself, rising with the battlemented walls and towers of its dismantled abbey, once more freed him from all fears, and allowed him to find heart to chatter as glibly as ever to his uncle on indifferent matters; for Levi forbade any allusions in his discourse to the transactions of the morning, wisely remarking that, though it is well to observe all things, some are better to be thought upon than spoken.

CHAPTER III.

Look where the master comes ; 'tis a playing day, I see—
How now, Sir Hugh? 'tis no school to-day.

SHAKSPEARE.

A MAY-DAY in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was a very different festival of rejoicing to what it is in our times, when the ancient rites in honour of the goddess Flora (for there is little doubt amongst antiquaries but that the festival owes its origin to the sacrifice of the heathens) have given place to the singular fantasies of the black votaries of foul chimneys ; when, for one day in the year at least, with the sable garments of the profession shining in all the glory of gold-leaf and tin-foil, the sweeps of London triumph in faded flowers and paper crowns ; a sad, but perhaps too just, caricature of many an earthly crown, and of many a votary of sublunary grandeur.

The festival of May-day in the reign of Elizabeth was one of universal delight, shared alike by the court, the gentry, and all classes of society ; that time being considered as the boundary between winter and summer, as the birthday of flowers, love, plenty, and rejoicing. And in no part of England, at the period of our narrative, was it more honoured than in this "outmost corner of the west," where all the ancient ceremonies, whose traces now only exist to remind us of their decay, were duly and fully observed.

Tavistock, the scene of these delights, situated about three miles from Dartmoor, bore then a very different aspect to what it does at present. The monks, it is true, had been driven from their nest by Cromwel, Earl of Essex, during the reign of Henry the Eighth ; but the stately abbey, with its richly-sculptured chapter-house, its battlemented walls and tapering pinnacles, still reared its head above the rapid Tavy, that ran past its base, just as it does now, tumbling and foaming over the masses of rock which form the bed of the river, or, when the sun played in a full stream upon its waters, appearing like "strings of glittering diamonds" ; the jewels of those pixies and fairies, who were believed to make their sports and to wanton in the fountains that spring from the hollow caves and dark rocks of the moor. On the banks, opposite to the abbey walls, a grove of trees, ex-

tending to the very summit of the hill and sweeping down to the verge of the river, dropped their green arms into the flood, and at every turn of its winding course those beautiful combinations of light and shadow, of vivid foliage, rock, and water, rendered the immediate vicinity of the stream so delightful, as to distinguish it, *par excellence*, by the name of *The Walk*.

The gothic house, formerly the hospital of the Lazars, or the Maudlin, a building of great antiquity, and many a venerable mansion whose founders had witnessed the contests of the Red and White Roses, then stood in all the pomp of their sculptured ornaments. The shops exhibited their antiquated fronts, supported by low, thick columns of granite, with the goods exposed for sale lying open upon a kind of counter, without any glass to protect them, under a colonnade that showed the gothic origin of these buildings. The sole entrance was by a little door called a hatch, reaching no higher than the waist of the master or his apprentice, who stood behind it ready to attend upon the customers as they passed along, frequently inviting them to examine the stores offered to their choice, and as frequently to share in a gossip on the settlement of their neighbours' affairs.

Near the church, the plainest building in the town, and which, like many a plain face, has outlived all the beauties by which it was once surrounded, grew, in stately row, a solemn arcade of yew trees, in compliance with that obsolete law which tradition says enjoined that yew trees should be planted in every churchyard to provide bows for the unrivalled archers of the land. These trees, casting a deep gloom around, were in perfect harmony with the dark-coloured stone of the tower, whose plain architecture served as a foil to that of the magnificent abbey church which stood near. Of the latter not a vestige, except the single arch of a tomb, said to be Orgar's, Earl of Devon, now exists. At the south-west of the parochial church there stood a house whose front was ornamented by an open book carved in stone, which showed that the edifice was a public one. It was, in fact, the school-house, where in the olden time, though I must allow that antiquaries have doubted it, the Saxon grammar school was held, which at the date of our narrative had somewhat degenerated into a school for a set of bare-legged and curly-headed youngsters, called the Latin boys. Their master, Barnabas Ferule, was a leading man in the town, famed for having a hard hand at a flogging, and the surest information relative to all news abroad and at home. He was respected

even by the great man of the parish himself, Sir Hugh Fitz, for his consummate art in casting nativities, for having the best recipes for raising pixies and fairies, and for anointing the eyes of mortals, so that they might look upon them when raised, without the danger of being struck blind for their presumption.

Barnabas was a little man, very meagre, and looked as if he had been boiled, so wan and so sallow was the skin upon his cheeks ; whilst a pair of bright goggle-eyes, set in a rim of scarlet, added to his countenance such an air of wildness and disorder that with his thin grey locks hanging uncombed about his face, and a beard half-starved for want of nourishment, he had very much the appearance of what the country people here call a *mazed man*. Add to which, his sitting up at nights to contemplate the stars, and other nocturnal studies in the pursuit of judicial astrology, had so helped to change him, that he had become altogether like one of those spectres in whose existence he so devoutly believed. The care of the Latin boys, the office of town bailiff, and of assistant barber-surgeon, with the incumbrance of a wife and six small children, were all things that helped to hinder this learned votary of astrology from growing fat upon an income not exceeding eleven pounds a year.

Upon the morning of May-day, Barnabas had risen before it was light, after having sat up all night to watch a particular conjunction of the heavenly bodies, till the great church clock struck the hour of two, when he stole into his bed to dream in which house of the moon was lodged the fortunes of a neighbour's bantling just ushered into this world of woe. But Barnabas had not long been allowed to indulge these visions of repose, having been obliged to quit his couch soon after in order to rock the cradle of the younger born of his own house, whose repeated cries had disturbed both himself and his less active wife from the sweet influences of sleep. No sooner had the sun shewn his broad red face over the eastern hills than a clamorous peal of bells, that made the old tower shake again with their merry tongues, once more caused Barnabas to start from his bed ; and, hastening to don a new black gown of kersey, he strode down stairs to meet the group of his big and little boys, who on this occasion were ordered to assemble at that very early hour.

The school-room, into which we must now introduce the reader, was a long, old, gothic chamber, with large beams of carved oak forming the ceiling, decorated with many a grinning and monstrous head, as the finishing ornaments of the arched

supporters. The narrow windows were placed so high as to preclude all possibility of the boys being tempted to idle their time by staring out of them at the passengers below; and many a long table and bench stood ranged around. At the upper end of the room was a very curious carved chair, representing on its back a monk holding a book, with a child by his side, who seemed as if he was receiving instruction in the art of reading, with these words inscribed above, "Schola Saxonica de Tavystoke," shewing that this ancient seat of learning had once been the property of the Saxon grammar school. A raised desk stood before it, to which was fastened, by an iron chain, the precious and solitary Latin dictionary devoted to the use of the whole school. A large birchen rod (for this terror of little boys is of ancient date), and a wooden spatula, to inflict punishment on the hand, rested one on either side of the dictionary, being, to that body of learning, what supporters are to a coat of arms.

The school-room was soon filled; for, as this day was designed for a holiday, none of the lads had been "creeping like snail unwillingly to school." Mirth and eager expectation sat on the countenance of each little, round, rosy-faced boy. Their heads were all combed as smooth as flax by the care of their good mothers, except where nature, defying such formalities, had curled them with too much obstinacy to admit their being made to resemble the tail of old Dobbin, the mill-horse, to which Launcelot Gobbo compares the locks of his son. And with no small degree of pride did Barnabas contemplate his flock, now dressed in their Sunday clothes, and each ready to sustain the part destined for him in the May games.

The moment the master appeared, the whole fry set up with one voice their small shrill pipes, and, agreeably to custom, exclaimed "Holiday for the Latin boys, holiday for the Latin boys! God save the Queen and our master!"

"And all the nobles, and the knights of the land," added Barnabas; "that's right my little lads, shout merrily, and a holiday you shall have, or Maid Marian, our May Queen, would lack her pages. Where's Jacky Kelly and Bob Physic?"

"Jacky Kelly," said a lad with a face shining like a silver groat, "is gone to get the ladle for the hobby-horse as you told him. And Bob Physic is gone to milk Dame Ferule's cow, for fear he should get sore udders, because Bob forgot to milk him last night."

"*He! him!*" exclaimed Barnabas. "Will you never, Tommy

Osegood, learn to speak English? Will you never learn your genders, your masculine and feminine genders, my little lad? Why it was but last night I told you the same, when you called the mune *he*. Don't you know, Tommy, I have told you before now that a man is known in a moment by his tongue, and that a clodpole or a gentleman may be instantly detected by the grammatical construction of his sentences? Have I not told you these things, and I must say with Cicero, '*Miror, cum præceptor sit adeo insigniter eruditus, te non ulterius fuisse progressum.*' And now, my lads, have you all got your parts? for we are to play before Sir Hugh Fitz and a noble company this evening, Oberon and Titania, with a prologue of my own composition; Tommy Osegood and Sammy Budd remember what I told you before, you must walk smoothly and lightly along, and not tramp with that gait, like a plough-boy after the team. Stand up, Tommy, and let me see you embrace Titania, and lead her hand in hand as you take her to her bower. Trip, boy, trip; don't you know your fairies always trip: why that's like the paces of widow Moffat's grey nag; you must play your fairy steps better than that."

"Look at me, lads," continued Barnabas, as he took Sammy Budd by the hand, and led the lad, holding him by the ends of his fingers, on tip-toe across the school-room.—"Don't you see I move with grace? Titania, hang your head over your left shoulder, and don't keep it upright in that stiff way, like the sign of Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. That's right, that will do—now turn it gently round, and fix your eyes on me; pshaw! not in that way, you must not move your head as if it turned east and west upon a pivot! And remember, Sammy, you must just hold up your petticoats a little with the left hand, just to shew the tip of the toes and the top of the instep, as gentlewomen do when they go along to church. That's a good boy, that's very well; Mistress Margery Champernoun has lent her green farthingale and kirtle for you to play the fairy queen in, and we'll make as nice a little woman of you as ever was seen: and now you must fly from Oberon, whilst he follows after you. What have you done with your wings? They were new last May-day and cost sixpence."

"Mother broke one of them," said the lad; "she took it away to brush the cobwebs off the books of Sir Hugh Fitz, when she worked up at the great house."

"Titania's wings to brush cobwebs off the books of an old

lawyer!" exclaimed the master; "that is as great a violation in the right use of things as it would be in a Roman priest to raise the devil with holy water. The lawyers use the dust of their profession to throw in the eyes of the people, and not Titania herself must sweep it out, or down goes their craft, as a court wit would say," cried Barnabas, laughing heartily at his own far-fetched conceit. "Oberon, my lad, hold up your head; you know you are a king—you must have majesty, dignity: look at me; now advance towards the fairy queen—very well; but don't stick out your belly, dignity is seated in the head and shoulders; raise your right arm, as you present her with a bunch of flowers and a posy: not so, your action must be free and easy, never make your arms stand straight out like a barber's pole. Now follow Titania, I'll shew you how to do it:" and Barnabas ambled trippingly after Titania, followed by Oberon, who winked slyly at the other boys, and twisting his little mouth into a caricature expression of his master's face, followed close behind him imitating his gestures, like a monkey skipping after a dancing bear.

"And now, my lads," said Barnabas, "practise your morris dance, and we will all away to the mansion of Sir Hugh, to give a May-day salutation, and to taste of his good cheer at the buttery-hatch; and then for the green wood, and to bring home the May boughs for the procession. Dance, boys, dance, and I'll give you a touch on the tabor and pipes."

Barnabas did so, and, after having instructed his little party in the best manner he could in the practice of the morris dance, he gave some orders to his wife, and then led all the school away to the mansion of Fitz-ford.

CHAPTER IV.

He had been long tow'rd's mathematics,
Optics, philosophy, and statics,
Magic, horoscopy, astrology,
And was old dog at physiology;
But with the Moon was more familiar
Than e'er was almanack well-willer;
Her secrets understood so clear,
That some believed he had been there.

HUDIBRAS.

OF the residence of Sir Hugh Fitz nothing now remains but the ivy-grown gateway; nor is it the building alone that has experienced those changes that follow the revolutions of time. Of the noble parks that once surrounded the house not a vestige exists; and the gentle eminence on which it stood is now divided by hedge-rows into a monotonous scene of meadow-lands, whilst in front of the edifice, or rather of its ruined gateway, where in former days the stately oak and elm cast their deep shadows, the walls are now overspread with a cloud of dust from the whirling wheels of the stage coach, as it passes rapidly up the new Plymouth road to the accompaniment of the huntsman's chorus in *Der Frieschutz*, played, or rather tortured, upon the key-bugle by the guard, to the great wonder and delight of all the little boys, maidens, and gossips. Summoned by this well-known salutation, they eagerly press forward to witness that great event to a country town, the arrival of the stage-coach, with all its excitations of changing the smoking and jaded horses for others ready harnessed, fresh and vigorous; staring at the dust-covered passengers, the tumult of ostlers and postilions, and that important personage the portly master of the whip, buried in the broad and manifold capes of his drab great coat and Belcher handkerchief.

How different from this was the scene of former days! No dusty road, no whirling wheels, then disturbed the green sward, or broke the deep silence that reigned about the mansion of a family who, famed for the pride of blood and pedigree, could, as the arms and quarterings of their house declared, trace their origin to the days of the Norman conqueror. The mansion of Fitz-ford stood at the termination of an avenue of stately trees,

whose lofty tops formed an archway above, so green and imperious to the sultry heats of summer that the trunks of the old elms were embedded in moss, and hung with festoons of ivy and creeping plants. The rooks, those dusky inhabitants of the elm, here held their colony undisturbed, except in the early part of spring, when that avowed enemy of their rising generations, the formidable cookmaid, issued her mandate that sundry of the young ones should be slain to supply the tables of the great hall with a rarity of Devon, a rook pie, sauced with the rich scald cream of the county.

At the end of the avenue appeared the gate-house, a low building of the time of Henry the Seventh, bearing upon its front, carved in stone, a shield with the arms of Fitz. A well-turned archway, ornamented with the oak-branch and the label-moulding, gave entrance to an inner court, where stood around the various buildings belonging to the mansion. The front of the edifice faced the south; it was substantial, well-proportioned, and elegant, though lightness was not the character of the buildings. The gothic doorways were richly ornamented in their carved tops, and the massive mullions of the long square-headed windows, enclosing little diamond-shaped portions of glass, were of great strength and thickness.

On the eastern side stood the chapel. And, though the present possessor of the estate had renounced the errors of popery for the light of the Reformed Church, yet a couple of figures carved in stone, representing the Virgin and Child, within a niche, proclaimed that this sacred edifice, like the rest of the buildings, was of that date when the Roman Church still held her sway over England.

The chimneys rose in massive clusters, whilst the volumes of smoke that curled upwards from their tunnels proclaimed that good cheer was no stranger to these walls; and the savoury steam of boiling pots and kettles, that floated through the open door of the common hall, confirmed this indication of old English hospitality.

About two hundred yards from the house flowed the river Tavy, passing on towards the west, and seeming by its pleasant murmurs to talk to the numberless little rocks, pebbles, and banks beset with wild flowers that it visited in its course. A bridge, still remaining, of three beautifully turned arches, speckled with white lichen and hung with ivy, formed a most picturesque object, and crossed the river at the point called Fitz-

ford, a name that extended itself to the mansion. The "smooth shaven turf" of a green lawn swept down from the house to the banks of the river, here and there decorated with some stately oak, that stood in solitary grandeur, and afforded by the shade of its multiplied foliage a pleasant spot for the repose of the deer as they strayed from the thick covert of the park to drink of the clear flood. In the heat of noon they would stand in groups, crouching their heads for shelter under the broad arms of these lords of the forest.

From the lawn the abbey of Tavistock appeared in great beauty, its clustering pinnacles rising above the old houses and picturesque gables of the town, the mountainous heights of Dartmoor finishing the scene, at the evening hour often glowing in purple, which afforded that fine tone of colour in the background so much the subject of admiration to the eye of the poet and the painter. A well of the purest water, known by the name of Fitz's well, rose near this spot; and, though not a vestige of the building now remains, it was then covered with an arch resembling the niche of a holy well. The groups that sometimes surrounded this spot would have afforded a subject for the pencil of Mulready. There many a little boy and girl, with their pitchers in their hands, came from the town to fetch water, their lips and cheeks like a new-blown rose, their legs bare, and their clothing too scanty to hide the bounties of nature in their well-formed and plump limbs. Here they would fill their pitchers, put them down, and run after the deer with a portion of bread saved from dinner in their hand, with the hope to entice the pretty dappled foresters to come within their reach.

Here, too, they would loiter in their task, as they plucked many a wild flower from its bed; and, should the evening hour steal upon them, they would return together in company to the town, carefully avoiding *Pisgie* lane in their way, then celebrated as the haunt of those little elves of Devon called pixies, whose fame in some parts of the country is not altogether extinct, even at the present time.

Behind the mansion of Fitz, towards the north, on the abrupt eminence of a hill, stood the noble park, presenting at every turn that scenic effect of light and shade, so wild and so enchanting, which is always found where the trees rise the one above the other on the slope of a hill. Often was the light there seen to sparkle suddenly upon the eye through a shade of the deepest gloom; sometimes the sky peeped in soft and blue, and at others

reflected a fiery glow from the setting sun. Beyond the boundaries of the park lay many a fair meadow, many a farm-house and wooded glade, within the territory of the wealthy knight, Sir Hugh Fitz of Fitz-ford.

Sir Hugh himself was now fast declining into the vale of years. He had been eminent in the law, as his biographer declares, who has handed down for the benefit of posterity, or for that of the gentlemen of the long robe in the inns of court, one or two opinions of Sir Hugh in knotty points of law. At the time, however, at which we introduce him to the reader, he had retired from public life, and devoted himself exclusively to those pursuits in which he so much delighted, namely, the antiquities of the world visible, and researches into the world invisible; one of his feats in the last-mentioned study having been also handed down to posterity, together with his law opinions, by the biographer to whom we have above alluded.

Sir Hugh, like a retired doctor, who now and then gives advice gratis from the pleasurable habit of feeling an irregular pulse and observing the indications of disease, would sometimes still give his law gratis to his poorer neighbours, and also to those of a more wealthy class, observing this distinction between the two, viz., that by the former his opinions must be received as oracles, infallible as a pope's bull or a quack-doctor's panacea; and by the latter as friendly hints, suggestions, and advices that, if duly observed, would save them the costs of a chancery suit, and were more to be relied upon than the opinions of all the bench of judges, with the assistance of all the bar to boot.

But these little relapses into his old profession were, as we before stated, but occasional indulgences; something like the habits of an old cat, who now and then pounces upon a mouse, though she may have long since abandoned the pursuit of prey to the paws of the younger tabbies. Sir Hugh Fitz would say, the latter years of a man ought to be devoted to the most useful and serious pursuits, that the world and its follies ought to be abandoned, and that therefore he had made up his mind to devote the evening of his days to things worthy a philosopher and a christian; a reason so just and luminous, that accordingly he gave up nearly all his days, and very often half his nights, to the study of astrology, a science, or, if the reader pleases, a mania, common in his day.

In his less important avocations, or, as he would term it, "in the strangeness of his unbending fancy," Sir Hugh amused him-

self with antiquity, in a manner that, had he lived in our days, would have procured him the honour of laying before some Antiquarian Society many a curious paper.

Sir Hugh's antiquarian researches, however, were chiefly local, and we believe we may say that he was the first person who in his day thought it worth while to examine the druidical remains of Dartmoor. This he had done, according to his own assertion, with success ; so that he could tell in what precise spot many an old Druid had played his pranks to astonish the multitude, where he had practised the supposed charm on the shaking or logan stones, where the sacred fires were kindled, and what rude rocks had undergone the chisel to form them into the seat of judgment or of superstition. But this was not all ; it had been the grand aim, the object of Sir Hugh's hopes, one day or other to cultivate an acquaintance with the fairy tenants of the lone caves and deep hollows of the moor ; so that, after repeated labours and trials, he expected one of these days to be able, like the famous Dr. Dee, to pocket a little pixie in a nut-shell, or to cork her up in his own closet—a thing specially recommended as the safest way by Dee himself, should the spirit be a female, since even fairies of the softer sex, the learned Doctor assured his readers, were at all times prone to gadding.

Such were the chief avocations of the great and wise Sir Hugh Fitz. And though, what with his astrology and his schemes, he lived very like the man in the moon, upon whom he spent whole nights in gazing, still he was not altogether devoid of earthly thoughts and affections. One of the strongest and most amiable was the love he bore to an only son, the prop of his age, and the last scion of his noble house. John Fitz was his pride and his delight, and he considered the young gentleman wanted nothing to make him perfect but an intercourse with the stars, and a little grubbing amongst the cairns on the moor ; and it must be confessed the young man's inaptitude to these pursuits was a thing that now and then vexed the parental solicitude of an affectionate father.

Sir Hugh had another near tie in his wife, Lady Theodora Elizabeth Fitz, who, not to be outdone by her husband in the noble pursuit of science, had devoted much time, inquiry, and attention to a certain long roll of parchment, which bore depicted at the bottom the goodly figure of a warrior, from the ten fingers of whose hands sprang forth leaves, and, instead of feet, oak roots were represented as the supporters of his dignity.

From the body of this grim founder of the race issued a long scroll, which wound, and twisted, and ramified into all the intricacies and incomprehensibilities of grandfathers and great-grandmothers, first, second, and fiftieth cousins, marrying and intermarrying, all with grand names and great houses ; the entire work forming that charm of pride, that lullaby of brainless descendants and worthless heirs, that sanctifier of fools, that record of dust and ashes, THE FAMILY PEDIGREE.

Upon this fascinating labyrinth would Lady Fitz gaze with such delight, such curious investigation, that at last she positively found out that she was related, either by blood or connexions, to all the nobly born in and out of the land. She would have traced her race up to Adam himself, but that he was too common a father for a line of such distinction. She could boast twenty grandfathers celebrated for having lost their heads, and ten countesses for having lost their reputations ; but still countesses were countesses all the world over, so not one of them would Lady Fitz have cleared out of the great scroll, even if by so doing she could have cleared their characters.

Then there was such a number of lords and knights, such broken-down and cracked-crowned warriors, such judges who carried the authority of the laws in their portly stomachs and long robes—such bishops and abbots, who left behind them such monuments of their merit cut in stone—such noble mothers, who managed to slip into the pedigree, with broad lands and gold pieces at their backs—such virgins, who died in the sanctity of single blessedness for lack of husbands—and lastly, there was a poet in the list, but how he managed to get there nobody knew ! and Lady Fitz had nearly rubbed out his name, by fastening at his back the string which kept together the noble family, when they were all rolled up and laid upon the shelf.

But we fear our readers will say that we are something like Lady Fitz, and that we have wandered from the root of our subject to lose ourselves amidst its branches. We have, however, but a word or two more to say respecting Sir Hugh, when we shall introduce him *in propria persona*, and let him speak for himself.

In person he was of the middling height, neither corpulent nor lean, but well conditioned, and tolerably well favoured. His double-pointed beard was sleek and grey, and a couple of grey locks of hair stood on end, and projected themselves above either of his temples, from under a black velvet cap, that sat close

round the head, finished by a loose and full top of the same material. He wore a small close ruff round the throat, with a gown richly furred ; a hose and coat of black velvet, garnished with many a point, and studded with buttons down the front, and at the shoulders, formed of the finest gold. His sword was like that of a gentleman, and an old one too, since it was more calculated to become a respectable appendage to his rank than for actual use. The haft was set with precious stones, but it was difficult to draw it from the scabbard. Nocturnal studies and law cases had dimmed the fire of his eyes, but had not sunk them in his head ; and the frequent absence of Sir Hugh's mind from external things very often gave them a fixed stare, as he looked intently upon any object that might be before him, and saw nothing but what was in the clouds, or within the besotted fancies of his own brain.

Such was the doughty knight to whom Barnabas now proceeded, attended by his little boys, in pursuit of the Maying. As the worthy master paraded up the long avenue of trees we have before described, the rooks, disturbed by the steps of intruders, cawed and flapped their wings as they sprang from their nests in the lofty elms, and set off in a full flight to seek a shelter less disturbed, amongst the old trees of the domain. The wide portal of Fitz-ford speedily opened to these early visitants, and Barnabas, heading his little regiment, marshalled them into double files, and proudly entered the inner court. A whole kennel of dogs, kept near the house, instantly set up their throats, and barked and yelped at the approach of strangers, whilst a large black eagle, a favourite with the knight, which had been taken on Dartmoor when very young, flapped its wings, spreading them wide, and vainly attempting to burst from the chain that confined her, to pounce upon the intruders.

Barnabas and his little boys walked directly up towards that part of the house inhabited by the family. The master then raised his hand, looked round, and, nodding the signal of command, the boys opened their morning song of salutation, as Barnabas, the composer of this choice piece of English Rhymes, chimed in the bass of his own voice to the shrill pipes of his little scholars, in a manner about as harmonious as the accompaniment of a cracked double bass to the squeaking of a couple of fiddles, and with no small delight did he now raise and then let fall his hand, to mark time to the following rhapsody of his own composition.

The morning is gay,
Come out to the May ;
The owl is a-bed,
And the lark in his stead,
On the sweet white-thorn as he sits,
Now carols a summons to Fitz.

Oh maidens come, and youths arise,
Follow to the gay green wood :
There dew drops lurk in cowslips' eyes,
And pixies kiss the silver flood.

Each flower is spread
On its velvet bed :
The thrush sings his lay,
Then come out to the May ;
For the lark on the thorn as he sits,
Now carols good morrow to Fitz.

The song ended, the young troop with one accord doffed their caps, and loudly exclaimed, "Largesse to the Latin boys! God save Sir Hugh Fitz! God save the Queen!" As these shouts increased, so did the yelping of the dogs and the uneasiness of the eagle; and all the household of the knight, from the cook and housekeeper to the humblest scullion of the kitchen, left their several occupations to rush into the court and hear the song.

Just as the first-mentioned personage was very civilly inviting Master Barnabas to walk into the buttery hatch and taste a morning draught of white ale, one of those long, narrow, square windows opened in that part of the house inhabited by its master, and the bewildered head of Sir Hugh, crowned by an embroidered night-cap, became visible to all present, as he thrust it out, and, with a vacant stare, inquired what was the matter that he should be thus disturbed.

"Bless your honour's heart," said Barnabas, "can you have forgot that this is May-day morning? and I and my boys come but according to the good and ancient custom of these parts, to give greeting to the noble house of Fitz, whose master is the very Caput of the whole parish, as I may say; and these lads would crave of your honour a largesse to make the hay sweet." And before Barnabas could end his speech the shouts of "Largesse to the Latin boys" again rent the air.

"May-day!" said Sir Hugh, staring about him like one just awakened out of his sleep; "May morning! good lack! I did

not know it was morning; can anybody tell me if I have been to bed?"

"That can I, your honour," said the cook, who now advanced bearing the mace of office, a ladle, in her hand. "But your honour's head is so mazed about the *mune* that you often don't know day from night. You have been a-bed; for just as your honour was going into your chamber, you bid Robin, the varlet, call me; and when I came, you asked me what I wanted? and so I told your honour it was your own pleasure to acquire my attendance; and you then said, says you, 'Dolly, kill me by to-morrow morning a black hen, and be sure to turn her rump to the east when you do so, and save me the blood of her in a porringer.'"

"True, true," cried Sir Hugh, completely recalled to life by the association of ideas this anecdote of the past evening had brought to mind, "I remember it well, and have you done it?"

"Yes, truly have I, Sir Hugh," replied the mistress of the spit; "I have killed a real black hen as ever was seen, though you wouldn't know a hen from a *guse* in one of your *mune*-gazing *mudes*," added this Devonian larder of capons in a lower voice, as she gave a sly wink to the schoolmaster.

"I am glad to see you, Master Barnabas," continued Sir Hugh; "you are welcome at this time; do you come up to my closet; let the boys eat their manchets and drink their cider in the hall, and they shall away to the Maying anon; and, in the meantime, do you come and look with me into the conjunction."

"But this is May morning, Sir Hugh," replied the schoolmaster, "and the boys lack——"

"Never you mind what they lack," cried Sir Hugh, who was again absorbed in his mysteries.

"And the May boughs must be brought home," continued Barnabas, "before twelve of the clock, or the May Queen Marian will have bad luck all the year."

"Never mind that," again cried Sir Hugh, "do you come up, good Master Barnabas, and we'll see into the conjunction immediately." And so saying, Sir Hugh drew in his head, closed the lattice, and thought no more of the largesse; for these fits of absence not unfrequently seized him when any demand was made upon his purse.

Barnabas, however, dared not disobey. He committed his little band to the charge of the cook, who promised them junkets and May cakes in the old hall; and there, leaving them to regale,



he retired to seek the great man in his closet; and as he did so, cast a longing, lingering look behind him, at the good fare he would just now much rather have tasted than the pleasures of a sublime *tête-a-tête* with the stargazing Sir Hugh.

CHAPTER V.

Yet none a deeper knowledge boasted,
 Since old Hodge Bacon, and Bob Grosted.
 Th' intelligible world he knew,
 And all men dream of, to be true.

HUDIBRAS.

BARNABAS speedily found his way to the closet of the astrologer, where everything bespoke the favourite pursuits of its master. All here was dark and dingy, and a row of old law-books stood upon their shelves covered with dust, notwithstanding the brushing from Titania's wings; whilst a few rare volumes, bound in parchment, with many a silver clasp, were worn smooth and shining from frequent use. One of these, decorated in its pages with strange figures and symbols, with divisions of the sun, moon, and stars in schemes, mansions, and conjunctions, lay open upon the table, which was filled with astrolabes, and various other instruments belonging to the "black art." A whole row of phials and bottles stood ranged upon a separate shelf, much in the order of a doctor's shop, with sundry strange figures, like nothing in heaven or on earth, represented upon them with leaf-gold.

There was a small stove in the room, standing within the jaws of the large old chimney, with a cracked crucible or two lying on the top, and a pair of bellows resting at the bottom, formed of oak, and carved with a running border of the leaves of that tree. And in order that even this piece of household furniture should not be without instruction, agreeably to the fashion of the time, a text from Solomon was cut in raised letters within the border, "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." Now, whether the possession of these instructive raisers of the wind had, by presenting such a text constantly before the eyes of Sir Hugh, encouraged him to hope that he might find out "the witty inventions" of the grand arcanum, we cannot say; but certain it is, scandal was busy

enough in declaring that he lost his prudence in the attempt, as did many wiser heads than his own.

In this room also were scattered about, with a confusion resembling the ideas tossed and tumbled together in the head of its master, plans of Dartmoor, measurements of cairns, circles, and druidical basins, bundles of herbs dried and green, with an inkstand, and a piece of moonstone, that stood close at the elbow of the knight. Two high and narrow windows admitted sufficient light to shew the darkness and discomfort that reigned around, and the whole chamber had that musty smell so acceptable to the olfactory nerves of all book-worms.

A picture of the grandfather of Sir Hugh, from the pencil of Holbein, hung over the chimney, and represented a very old man, who during his life had been a celebrated miser, with so much truth and nature, that avarice and misery appeared to be personified in every line of his mean and shrivelled features. And as if the painter, who tradition said had executed this piece for nothing, by way of study in his art, had designed slyly to satirize the original, he had introduced in the back-ground the cap and bauble of a fool carelessly resting upon a leather money-bag, closed and secured at the mouth.

When Barnabas entered the room, Sir Hugh was seated at a table, so wholly abstracted by a notable train of calculation, that he sat with open mouth holding a pen in the right hand, scratching his head under the night-cap with the other, and staring with wide-opened eyes upon Barnabas, wholly unconscious of the profound salutation of the schoolmaster, who bowed till his head nearly touched the ground, repeating a good-morrow to his patron with the utmost patience and humility. And long might he have bowed, but for an accident that once more recalled the wandering senses of Sir Hugh.

In bending forward, Barnabas had the ill luck, not being able to see what was in his rear, to upset a bundle of sticks that rested against the top of an old joint-stool, and down went stool and sticks to the ground. Sir Hugh started up; the first exclamation that passed his lips was, "Good lack, Master Barnabas, you have upset the hazel wands!—they should not have been moved till the third Wednesday of the present month."

Barnabas apologised, and instantly collected together the fallen twigs. Not readily knowing what to do with them, he was about to lay them on a side table, when Sir Hugh again exclaimed, "Not there, man! not there, for your life! don't

touch the crystal vial. That's the chief thing I want to talk to you about ; for I know and esteem your learning, Master Barnabas, in all matters touching the divine science."

The compliment came sweet upon the ears of the schoolmaster, who at this moment forgot the May-cakes and junkets of the hall, in the charm of finding himself summoned to a discussion, in which his own learning would be brought on the *tapis*, since Barnabas had no mind altogether to play the part that Whackum did to Sidrophel—

To be an under-conjuror,
Or journeyman astrologer.

However, desirous to cultivate the good graces of Sir Hugh, a second bow, if possible more profound and respectful than the first, followed. And once more drawing up his head into an erect position, Barnabas continued standing as fixed and immoveable as any piece of old furniture in the apartment.

"And now, Master Barnabas," continued his patron, "before we enter upon matters of abstruse science, we must attend to the necessary but less imposing claims of humanity.—How does the widow ? Is she cured of her quartan ?"

Barnabas shook his head.

"What !" exclaimed Sir Hugh, "not cured ! that can't be—it can't be."

"She had three shakes yesterday, I do assure you, Sir Hugh."

"It can't be, I am positive it can't be," cried Sir Hugh, "for did not I do the thing needful for her myself ; and that according to the advice of the great Agrippa ! Did not I take the parings of her nails, put them up in an old linen rag, tie the same round the neck of a live eel, and let him slip into the water on the first Friday of the last month ? Agrippa never knew the remedy to fail, and you'll not doubt his opinion I think."

"She is as bad as ever, I do assure you, Sir Hugh."

"It can't be, I tell you, Master Barnabas, she must be cured, though she shake till her bones rattle in her skin."

"Sir Hugh, I will not dispute with you," said the schoolmaster, "but the old woman has had her shaking fits as bad as ever ; but perhaps she may have mistaken the effects of age for those of an ague."

"It must be so," said Sir Hugh, "for as to her not being cured, it is impossible. Why if she were not cured, Master

Barnabas, it would be giving the lie to the learned Agrippa, the greatest man in medical astrology these latter times, or any other times, have yet produced. But no more of this foolish old woman, who doesn't know the shake of an ague from that of a frosty morning.—Let us talk of things more important. Master Barnabas, I am a man full of the crosses and cares of this life. I have failed; for the life of me I can't catch her."

"Then, Sir Hugh, you must have mistaken the means to be used in this matter. I know fairies are ticklish things to deal with, but they are to be had. May I ask what is your recipe?"

"I'll shew it you, Master Barnabas," said Sir Hugh. "I am determined to make another trial, and crave the assistance of your learning and experience."

"They shall both be at your service, most honoured Sir," replied Barnabas, "as in duty bound."

Sir Hugh rummaged amongst his papers, as his learned assistant drew close to him, and looked with anxious expectation to the opening of an old brown, dusty, and worm-eaten book of most ample contents. "Here it is," said Sir Hugh, "Dr. Dee's own recipe. But stay, my barnacles;" and he took up a pair that hung by a black ribbon round his neck. Barnabas lent an attentive ear as Sir Hugh read as follows:—

"An excellent way to catch a fairy, which will obtain any one that is not already bound. First, get of Venice facture a square crystal glass."

"I should say round," cried Barnabas.

"No, no, square," said Sir Hugh. "It suits best with the action of spirits, as the learned Dr. Dee says in his book."

"Pardon me, it must be round," reiterated the schoolmaster.

"All philosophers admit the contrary," cried Sir Hugh.

"The place of their confinement should resemble the form of the globe," said Barnabas. "Is not the world round?"

"I know nothing about the world, round or square," said Sir Hugh, "but I know this recipe to be infallible.—Let me go on.—Then lay the said crystal in the blood of a black hen three Wednesdays, and take three hazel-twigs of a year's growth, and peel them fair, and bury them where fairies haunt, and on the next Wednesday take up your sticks, and call her you would bind, three times on every stick, and so you shall call her in a dark place the three following Wednesdays, and, if she comes, catch her, and let her be well corked."

By the soul of Tycho Brahe," exclaimed Barnabas, "I can—

not hear this with patience—to think of calling up a fairy in the dark! and on three Wednesdays, instead of three Fridays.—Do you really expect, Sir Hugh, that a recipe like that will ever get you up a fairy? or that she can ever be seen in the dark? And on a Wednesday call! It must be a Friday.”

“You are quite wrong, Master Barnabas,” said Sir Hugh, “and if you maintain such an opinion you are no spiritmonger at all, and no astrologer to boot!”

“No astrologer, Sir Hugh!” cried Barnabas, and he started from his seat as he spoke: “No astrologer! you surely cannot mean to insult me!”

“I have no wish to insult you, Master Barnabas; but I repeat it, if you maintain such an opinion you have no knowledge of the action of spirits, and you are no astrologer.”

“No astrologer, Sir Hugh!” again exclaimed the impassioned schoolmaster: “Sir Hugh, I have been master of the Latin boys these ten years and upwards, and no one ever yet questioned the purity of my latinity; but nevertheless, had you found fault with my prosody, my hexameter or pentameter verses, or had my feet displeased you, why—why, Sir Hugh, I could have borne it; I could have managed to keep my ground without them.—But—no astrologer forsooth! Why, did not I hang Timothy Doleman, who was executed at Exeter last year, even from the very hour of his birth? Did not I tell his mother before he was breeched that all her pains would come to nothing? for that I had found a rope hanging over the boy’s head even from the very horns of the moon? Yet forsooth my skill must be called in question, and I am no astrologer!”

“I say it again,” cried Fitz, “that, to wave the question respecting fairies in particular, many charms and schemes must be worked in the dark; for what says that most learned, sweet, and curious astrologer, Cornelius Agrippa, on this very subject? But we are disturbed. Good lack; what a noise there is, what a clatter in the court-yard below—I fear this is no day for learned debates; the vain follies of custom stir up all my house to idleness and laughter. What can be the matter?”

The sounds which disturbed this learned discourse were of a mingled nature, the loud blast of a bugle-horn being followed by the trampling of horses’ feet in the court-yard below, and the blithe minstrelsy of pipe and tabor, that seemed to bear them company.

Sir Hugh once more undid the lattice, and took a hasty peep

at these new visitors. He speedily drew in his head, exclaiming, "By the satellites of Jupiter, it is the Glanville family from Kilworthy, though the Judge is not among them himself. There's Dame Glanville, and Lady Howard, and I don't know who besides. I had forgot, they come to join our people at the Maying. And good lack-a-day! there is my own son, John Fitz, amongst them, clad in Kendal green. But now I think of it, he is Robin Hood to-day in the sports and pastimes. Go down, Master Barnabas, and let your boys make some diversion to pleasure these new comers; go down, and I will follow immediately. How unlucky is this interruption! But why do you tarry there? Get you gone, and do as I bid you."

Barnabas obeyed; but feeling in the course of his descent to the court-yard that fasting beyond his usual hour and the late dispute had considerably sharpened his appetite, without farther deliberation he made his way to the buttery-hatch, in order to secure a due proportion of May-cakes, junkets, and other good cheer for his morning repast. And so pleasant did the school-master find the exercise of partaking of it, that, whilst employed in it, the immaterial world of pixies, spirits, and all things thereunto belonging, were forgotten, before the sensible and more material pleasures of a noble sirloin of roast beef, and the genuine spirits called up by a foaming tankard of ale.

CHAPTER VI.

No doubt, they rose up early, to observe
The rite of May; and hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE party, now arrived at Fitz-ford, consisted of Dame Glanville, wife of the judge of that name, Lady Howard, her near kinswoman, a young gentlewoman named Margaret Champernoun, to whom it was generally understood the judge had lately become guardian, his son, Frank Glanville, a wild young fellow, who had more of good spirits than good sense, and Sir Nicholas Slanning, who had served with credit in the wars, and now possessed an honourable name, with a small estate, a good person, and a temper that was both frank and generous.

John Fitz, son of Sir Hugh, formed the escort of these honourable personages to his father's house; and whilst he, with Sir Nicholas, and the other gallants, are at the bridle-rein of the ladies, assisting them to dismount, and ushering them into the house, it may not be amiss for us to take this opportunity of saying a word or two to the reader concerning the family of Glanville.

Judge Glanville, whose "lively effigies," as old Prince calls them, we have still the pleasure of contemplating in the parish church of Tavistock, was a man well known in his day as a sound and learned dispenser of the laws, neither shewing favour nor affection to his friends, nor any undue severity to his enemies, if they came within his power. He had been a good deal employed in affairs of state, and though, for reasons we shall hereafter have occasion to mention, he had now retired as much as possible from public life, he was still a warm advocate in upholding the interests of the government of Elizabeth and those of the Reformed Church, which now, like a vessel that has been tossed and tempest-worn on a troubled ocean, had once more taken shelter in the port of good old England. In his manners the Judge was mild and agreeable, though unusually grave, and at times even melancholy; a depression of spirits, supposed to have taken its rise, as it was not natural to him, from a great domestic calamity—the death of a favourite daughter, under circumstances peculiarly painful to his feelings. This event, which happened many years before the commencement of our narrative, was still so fresh in his recollection, and so intensely painful, that he could not bear the least allusion to it; and those few friends who were really acquainted with all the particulars of the sad occurrence so much respected his feelings on the subject that they were careful never to name it in his presence; and, indeed, to suppress as much as possible the memory of it altogether, in order to prevent the idle curiosity of others.

In addition to this grief, the wild and extravagant manners of his eldest son, Frank Glanville, had also given the Judge a good deal of pain; add to which, he had to contend with some matrimonial troubles occasioned by the overbearing temper of his wife: so that the Judge was not altogether quite so happy a man as the stateliness of his condition, his great wealth, and influence in life, might have induced most persons to believe.

Since the death of his daughter, Glanville had never been known to share in any sports and pastimes; he did not, there-

fore, attend the May-day party at Fitz-ford. Dame Glanville, we ought to mention, was his second wife, and not the mother of his deceased daughter. Her character was so wholly opposite to that of Glanville that many of his friends wondered how he came to marry her. It is, in fact, a question we could not pretend to solve; and indeed we believe we may venture to say that it sometimes puzzled the worthy Judge himself when he thought upon it.

Dame Glanville, we have before said, was accompanied by her near kinswoman, Lady Howard; and this gentlewoman will be found to play so conspicuous a part in the sequel of our story that though in our drama her time for action may not yet be arrived, she must not be passed over in silence. Lady Howard had been given in marriage, when but sixteen years old, to Sir Theodosius Howard, a knight, possessed of almost princely wealth, a proportionate share of pride, and years enough over his head to have rendered him the grandfather of his childish bride. She was extremely beautiful; her beauty, however, was of the Juno cast, and had something forbidding in its lofty carriage.

Though the idol of her doting husband, she failed not, as might have been expected, to hate him most cordially. Yet, young as she was, her mind, possessed of considerable natural force, had acquired a maturity seldom found at so early an age; and, finding that her marriage could afford her no happiness, but such as might result from gratified pride and ambition, she resolved not to be sacrificed for nothing. Her thoughts thus early and exclusively bent on self-interest (the most narrowing principle of degradation to the human heart), the wealth of her husband became almost the sole object of her desires; that she might possess it entire in case of his decease. By constantly guarding her actions, and framing her attentions and her words to suit his humour, she daily acquired the art of deception, till it grew with her into a habit too powerful ever after to be broken; and, as some remuneration for the constraint under which she lay in the presence of her old knight, she indulged a sarcastic, sneering virulence of temper and remark upon every other creature who did not exactly please her fancy.

For five years Lady Howard endured this life of constant deceit, self-command, and constraint, till, just after she had completed her twenty-first year, her husband died, leaving her the fruits of her policy, the unlimited command of his vast

estate, to the injury of many poor and near relatives, who might with justice have expected something at his death.

It is needless to say that, young, beautiful, and endowed with an income that might have improved the fortunes of the first noble in the land, Lady Howard had many suitors. But though she affected no disguise, saying that she thought it possible she might wed hereafter ; yet, for the present, she rejected them all. Of course the connection likely to be formed by so distinguished a person became a regular theme of gossip and conjecture in the neighbourhood where she lived, and she was successively given in marriage, by report, to almost every handsome young gallant upon whom she bestowed the least notice. At one time she was held to be on the eve of wedding with Sir Nicholas Slanning, having three times hunted with him and his hounds. Once Sir Thomas Morley was chosen, by the many-tongued multitude, as the happy man ; and then young John Fitz was thought to have eclipsed them all, and by the attention he paid her he was reported to be as desirous of the union himself as it was publicly known his mother was that it should take place.

We are not in possession of many facts to throw a light on these conjectures. Thus much, however, we can say, that, whatever might have been the motive, there certainly was a time when John Fitz both paid to, and received from, the splendid and beautiful Lady Howard a more than ordinary share of attention, sufficient to warrant all the reports so busily circulated. But this attention of late had altogether ceased, and they now met and parted with the civility of ordinary friends ; so that report, always ready in settling the affairs of others, at once proclaimed John Fitz a rejected lover of his wealthy mistress.

Lady Howard had a noble mansion near Tavistock, but did not always inhabit it ; for, being nearly related to Dame Glanville, that Dame, thinking probably by her warm friendship to obtain the lady for one of her own sons, was very pressing in inviting her beautiful kinswoman to pass much of her time at Kilworthy, as being less solitary than her own house. Lady Howard chose to accept these invitations, though nothing yet had resulted from them, and often stayed there for four or five months together. It was during one of these visits that she had now joined the party for the May-day sports.

Having said thus much of the chief personages newly arrived

at Fitz-ford, we shall conclude with some mention of Mistress Margaret Champernoun ; and we shall here but repeat what was generally understood to be her history amongst the friends and neighbours of the worthy Judge. Her father (Glanville said), in the early part of his life, was the dearest friend he had in the world, though the violent party spirit of politics, and, above all, a difference in religious opinions, had afterwards estranged them from each other ; so that by degrees all intercourse ceased, and Sir Frederick Champernoun at last left the kingdom, after having expended a considerable portion of his estate in a fruitless lawsuit, and afterwards nearly all that remained of it in payment of a heavy fine levied upon him by the Star Chamber for some offence of a political nature.

Thus, nearly bankrupt, he retired to France, and for many years Judge Glanville knew nothing of the fate of his unfortunate friend, till the anxiety of Champernoun, when upon his death-bed, for his only daughter, had induced him to cause to be forwarded to England a letter addressed to Glanville, dictated by him (for he was too ill to write it himself) but a few hours before he expired. The subject of that letter may be easily gathered from what followed, since Glanville, on the receipt of it, immediately sent a trusty person over to France, who was commissioned to bring the daughter of Sir Frederick back with him to England.

At this period France was in a disturbed state, and it is therefore probable that the dying father, however he might have differed from Glanville in religious or political opinions, yet, knowing his worth, felt desirous to remove his child from a country where there was so little personal security, and to place her under the care of his early friend, to whose honour and probity he could entirely trust both herself and the small fortune he had to bequeath to her.

With all that warmth with which a mind naturally benevolent undertakes a good action did Glanville now enter upon his trust, as guardian to a young and lovely orphan, scarcely eighteen years old. Two things rendered her peculiarly interesting in his eyes—the consideration that she had not a friend in England besides himself, and the hope, though he was bound by the injunctions of her dying father not to endeavour to change her religious opinions, that, by living in his own Protestant family, she would of herself renounce the errors of the Romish church ; especially as at this time they could not be publicly avowed without much

danger, since instances daily occurred of the severities exercised on those who dared to perform or attend the mass : the family of Lord Morley, amongst others, having been fined, and even imprisoned, for the offence. Margaret told Glanville, when speaking of her previous life, that she had been brought up by her father in the greatest privacy. Her mother, she said, died soon after her birth, and she had never known female care or tenderness beyond that of a hired servant. She had no recollection of her native country, having been an infant when Sir Frederick fled with her to France, and yet she could speak English as well as French, as she had acquired the language from her father.

For the rest, we may add she knew nothing of the world, was gentle and yielding in her temper; but her character might rather be considered quiet than inert; as her mind, susceptible of deep feelings, displayed an energy, even in trifling circumstances, which showed how strong might be its exertions should occasion require them. In her person she was small and delicate; and, without possessing that regularity of features to which the term beautiful may be applied, there was so agreeable an expression in their combination, in the play of the rosy and full lips, which looked, as the poet says, "like twin cherries parted in sweet division;" such animation in the lustre of her hazel eyes, with a clear complexion, and hair that hung in rich profusion, curling like the vine about her fair brows and neck; that, though a critic in female loveliness might have denied the name of perfect beauty to her features, he could not deny that they possessed the power of beauty—that of fascination. Add to which Margaret had health and youth, things in themselves which, as we once heard remarked by a most exquisite painter of female grace and loveliness,* may be considered as the chief requisites of beauty, unless nature has been very perverse indeed in forming the face that can claim them.

It was to this young and engaging orphan that the good Judge Glanville now extended his care, and to whom he became more and more attached, till the habit of regarding her with peculiar tenderness rendered her almost as dear to him as if she had been his own child. When he rambled about his grounds Margaret was always at his side, and often was he diverted in these excursions by the innocent and playful character of her temper. If he

* Our English Raphael, Thomas Stothard, R.A.

was dull and melancholy, a thing which frequently happened, Margaret possessed that delicate tact of a feeling mind which enabled her to soothe or divert his sad thoughts, by turning them to contemplate the many subjects of consolation that Providence had afforded to the afflicted, and those hopes of Christianity, the best balm for a wounded mind, which, like stars in the midst of darkness, direct the traveller on his way, when but for these the path before him would be wholly obscured. If Glanville returned home cold and tired by his walk, or was fatigued by the studies of his closet, Margaret was the first to notice the least indication of his weariness, and with the utmost alacrity she would draw the easy chair by the side of the ample hearth, raise the smouldering fagots into a blaze, place the foot-cushion, and adjust the pillow for her guardian's head, asking him, whilst she did so, with a smile upon her lip, if she should order him a posset or a cup of sack to cheer up his spirits, as an evening draught.

In human life the occasions for great acts of kindness seldom occur, but little daily attentions are continually within the power of every one, and make up in their number that sum of good actions required of each living creature in society. They are, as it were, the small coin of exchange, stamped by benevolence and courtesy, current in a family or a neighbourhood, wanting which the general fund of comfort and sympathy would become bankrupt. And these little but amiable attentions, although they could not well be described or defined, insensibly win upon the heart, and find their interest repaid tenfold by the general love and affection which they never fail to inspire. They are as the habitual though minor virtues of a generous mind and a kind temper, and are never found to flourish with selfish, cold, or sluggish feelings, hateful qualities, that act like the touch of the torpedo, chilling and rendering inanimate every nobler principle of human action.

Having said thus much of Judge Glanville and his amiable ward, we shall now proceed to the general rejoicing which had collected together the honourable personages above named on the first of May. The hour was early, as the great bell of the clock-house had but just chimed six when the parties assembled. But the manners of good society at the period of our narration widely differed from those of the present time. Fine ladies and fine gentlemen did not then, as now, prefer the illumination of wax lights to that of the glorious sun, nor did they dine when he was going to bed, or under the influence of the moon, however much

she might be in fashion with learned votaries like Barnabas and Agrippa.

And as for May-day, now observed only by milkmaids and chimney-sweeps, in the times of good Queen Bess it was as much a festival of high fashion as a court ball or a masquerade is in the present more refined state of society. Yet, even in Elizabeth's time, the noble sports of May-day had somewhat degenerated; the delicate queen of the May, Maid Marian herself, being often personated by a "great lubberly boy," dressed up as a girl. But this degeneracy had commenced where degeneracy in most things takes its rise, within the walls and about the precincts of the great metropolis. It had not yet extended itself throughout all the counties of England; and in the west, Maid Marian was still performed by some damsel of good quality, chosen by the general voice of her compeers before the day of the festival.

On the present occasion, the lovely Margaret Champernoun was the May-day queen; and a worthy emblem she appeared of the youth and beauty of the spring. And as we conclude all our readers may not be as good antiquaries as certain learned men who have written so ably in illustration of the popular games of this country, we trust it will not be amiss to give them some very slight sketch of the characters and ceremonies of the present rejoicing.

At an early hour, the principal characters of the games assembled in a body to go out into the neighbouring woods to collect and bring home the sweet hawthorn, hung with its rich blossoms of purest white, and to form that regular procession in honour of the May we shall hereafter notice. John Fitz, a young and handsome man, attired in Kendal green, with a baldric, a bugle-horn, a black velvet cap, and a white plume drooping over his shoulder, bearing in his hand the long bow of English archery, was no bad representative of "Blythe Robin Hood"; since gallant manners and good looks were considered the characteristic qualities of that celebrated outlaw of merry Sherwood, and custom had for ages assigned to Robin the post of king of the May.

Margaret, this day his queen, appeared attired in a vesture of pink silk, ornamented with green ribbons, her tresses hanging gracefully over her shoulders from beneath a coif of silver tissue, bound round with a crown formed of gold and decorated with flowers. In her bosom she carried a nosegay; and, though

many a delicate blossom looked lovely, they seemed to be rivalled by the deep blush of youth and modesty that animated the fair cheek of the May queen. Friar Tuck, played by Frank Glanville, appeared clad in russet weeds ; and Sir Nicholas Slanning, who performed the fool's part by his own choice, though many said it was more natural to Frank Glanville, came gaily forward in a motley dress, faced, or, as the old phrase hath it, guarded with yellow ; the bauble in his hand representing a human head, with a pair of ass's ears ; his cap adorned by a cockscomb, and hanging down his back in the form of a jelly-bag, jingling at every movement of the head with the little bells with which it was thickly hung. A calf's-skin cloak cut short covered his shoulders, being the usual finish of the fool's dress in the days of Elizabeth ; a circumstance which forms a probable illustration of that passage in Shakspeare, where Constance, in a strain of contempt, bids Austria "go hang a calf's-skin on his recreant limbs."

The Lady Fitz, attired in the formidable ruff and farthingale of the period, with a waist as long and as stiff as if the buckram of which it was composed were designed to supply the place of armour, her neck hung with a treble chain of massive gold, received Dame Glanville and her party with all the ceremonious formality then considered an essential part of good breeding ; giving the Dame the highest place in the apartment, and marshalling her other guests something in the same way as would a herald, who knew, to the flourish of a lion's tail, the genealogical honours that belonged to each ; whilst the May queen, who, in fact, ought to have taken precedence of every one, at least on this day in the year, was left at the lower end of the apartment, for lack of Lady Fitz feeling assured whether she could or could not claim the dignity of armorial bearings.

Sir Hugh Fitz soon after appeared ; and whilst all the party (previous to their sallying forth to bring home the May) partook of that substantial good cheer which formed the breakfast of our ancestors, seated himself next to Dame Glanville, and entered into familiar discourse. The subject was general, and treated of the festivities of the day.

"I declare," said Dame Glanville, addressing Lady Fitz, in reply to some observation she made on the retired life of the Judge, "I protest that I really believe my husband leads so moping a life that he forgets everything around him : and more than that, he seems to forget what belongs to the laws of the

land ; since I could not this morning induce him to cause to be secured a strange-looking woman, who came lurking about Kil-worthy, and shewed herself to be a witch, by craving fire to light her torch of the maidens on May-morning."

"The woman, Dame Glanville," said Sir Nicholas Slanning, "might have been no witch for all she did so ; as to crave fire at the doors of the wealthy on May-morning is a popular superstition with the vulgar."

"It is so," said Sir Hugh Fitz ; "and I trace the custom, neighbour Slanning, to the Druids. It is the remains of a heathen sacrifice, the kindling of the Beltan fire to the god Baal ; and I will engage that the woman craved the light for no other purpose than to set in a blaze a wisp of straw, that her kine might pass through it as a preservative against disease during the rest of the year."

"Now, by the credit of my sceptre," said Sir Nicholas Slanning, who played the fool's part, "I will venture my cap and bells against your wisdom, that I tell what she came for, and that it was for something more than to charm horn cattle and brute beasts : she sought to parley with Mistress Margaret, the May Queen."

"You are a licensed fool, Sir Motley," said John Fitz, "so your tongue is no slander, utter what falsehoods it may."

"But children and fools speak truth, as the proverb goes," replied Slanning ; "and I tell you that the woman was desirous to come at the speech of Mistress Margaret. But I, being valiant as well as wise, thought a pretty damsel could learn no good of one who looked like a dealer in my wares, for her trade seemed to be licensed folly, the divining of fortunes ; so I bid her pack, shog, and begone, for fear of the cucking-stool, and threatened her back with a taste of my sceptre if she delayed. But hark ! John Fygge, the town piper, plays up merrily in the court below, and all the schoolmaster's little boys are singing in chorus, 'Hey for the greenwood, the maid, and the May,' so leave these wise colloquies, and, for one day in the year, make haste to follow a fool."

With these words, Sir Nicholas Slanning, full of thoughtless mirth and glee, ran off as swift as a roe towards the scene of amusement, followed by all the younger persons who formed the party at Fitz-ford. In the court-yard they were joined by a set of young people, dressed as the votaries of summer and of winter ; the former being decorated with flowers, and the russet

weeds of the latter with festoons of ivy, and with branches of holly in their caps. The young men were provided with bows and arrows, as archery formed a part of the day's sport.

CHAPTER VII.

———Love's a mighty lord ;
And hath so humbled me, as, I confess
There is no woe to his correction,
Nor, to his service, no such joy on earth.
Now, no discourse, except it be of love.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE youthful party soon gained the woods of Fitz-park, as Barnabas, heading his little boys, himself, on this day, as much a boy as any of them, followed the blyth sounds of pipe and tabor that led on before. The day was delightful, though a few grey clouds at times obscured the brilliancy of the morning sun. The hawthorn threw abroad its rich perfume, and every lowly cowslip and herb of the field lay, as it were, with open blossom, to welcome the return of spring. The deer in the park, as they rested under the chequered and quivering shadows, formed by the branches of the stately oak, yet but thinly clothed with leaves, started up at the approach of footsteps, and, shaking the dew from their velvet coats, reared their graceful necks, gazed steadily for a moment upon these intruders on their sylvan haunts, and bounded off with the utmost speed to seek a deeper solitude within them.

The whole scene was one of fresh and vivid beauty, the morning of the day harmonizing with the season of the year, lovely and cheerful; and gladly was it greeted by those whose age and temper corresponded with the scene. No sad thought, like a winter's cloud, no cold feelings, like its biting frosts, obtruded to chill the young hearts that now beat high with expectation, inspired by the exhilarating hour. The boys clambered the trees and tore down many a goodly branch to hang round the doors and windows of their home; whilst the hawthorns, thickly hung with their white blossoms, and sparkling with dew, were rifled as spoils of honour to grace the triumph of the day. And those youths whose ages were verging from boyhood into man-

hood, desiring to throw aside childish sports, and to practise the gallantry of their elders, culled many a flower of the yellow broom to offer a wreath to some pretty damsel in the company ; and many a kiss was stolen and granted with a forbidding gesture, but a laughing eye, as the chaplet was placed about the favoured brow.

These sports engaged the whole party for a time, till, upon the command being given by Barnabas, who acted as grand master of the ceremonies during the day, all hands, except those of the king and queen, and the fool, hastened to make up the May-pole, which was to be drawn with triumph into the town. At this juncture, Barnabas recollected that he had not directed the yeomen to what particular spot they were to bring the yoke of oxen, or the beeves, as he called them, to drag home the May-pole. The apprehension that some serious delay would arise, appeared to give the worthy master of the May sports considerable uneasiness.

John Fitz, or Robin Hood, saw this ; and as he, his queen, and the fool, were not yet called upon to play their parts in the ceremonies, he very good-naturedly proposed to his companions that they should relieve the fears of the schoolmaster by setting off for the farm-house, whence the yeomen were to bring the oxen, and direct them to the right spot. Barnabas thankfully accepted the offer, and the fool declared he would still wait on the king and queen, as he was too properly of the court of royalty to part company.

They had for some time pursued their way through one of those romantic forest tracts peculiar to Devon, when suddenly they perceived a female figure at a distance, clad in a russet cloak, that appeared to stand still to look upon them for a moment, and then struck into the neighbouring covert.

"By the wisdom of fools," said Slanning, "I am much mistaken if that is not the very woman who this morning asked for fire at Kilworthy. She seems again to be upon the look-out for the May Queen. Be she witch or no, she shall not cross the path of our pretty Marian for any evil purpose this day whilst I am thus gallantly armed ;" and he flourished his bauble as he spoke.

The party now advanced near the spot where the woman had been seen to make her retreat, when, in a manner as sudden as she had disappeared, she once more stood before them. Her features were hard and swarthy ; she was low in stature, and

looked sturdy. Her appearance was characteristic of the women who, in Devon and Cornwall, assist in the work of the mines. She came boldly forward, and as boldly demanded to speak with the Queen of the May.

"Aroint thee, witch, as Will Shakspeare says," cried Slanning. "What! cross the path of her majesty of lilies and roses, and that on her own day! and whilst she is supported by her consort royal on the one hand, and by her prime minister on the other! Stand back, good mother, for here I allow no one but myself to play the fool."

"But I will not stand back," said the woman, "and you shall not pass on till I have spoken with the May Queen, for I have that for her ear which a fool must not understand."

"Then speak it out boldly, woman," said John Fitz, "for though a fool hath ears, he has no understanding."

"You play the part of yonder motley as well as he," replied the woman in the russet cloak, "and as you will know my business with this damsel, you must; I come to do the part of an honest woman. I have found a jewel, which I am told belongs to this lady, and I seek her to restore it, and to crave a guerdon for my pains. The lady shall be the judge of my truth, and if this jewel is her own."

As she spoke she fixed her eye on the May Queen with a peculiar expression of intelligence, and tendered her a small cross of fine gold, ornamented with a few precious stones. At the sight of the cross Margaret turned pale as death, and, for a moment, was speechless with emotion. She extended her hand, took the jewel from the woman, but spoke not a word in reply to her address.

The surprise of the companions of the lady may be readily supposed. "What is this?" said John Fitz, in an angry voice as he observed the extreme agitation of Margaret; "you have alarmed this lady almost to fainting! You are some worker of evil spells—stop the woman, Slanning; I have heard my father tell of such creatures. She is some foul practiser—she shall answer this."

"No, no," cried Margaret, "the jewel is mine—it is a sacred emblem. It was once dearly valued by my late father. There are circumstances, recollections, connected with that token which forbid me to look on it unmoved. I shall be better soon. I would entreat you to leave me, that I may inquire of this woman how she came by a thing so dear to my feelings."

And hastily securing the little cross within her bosom, at her request Slanning and Fitz walked forward, whilst she lingered a few paces behind them. Margaret paused a moment, as if to collect herself, and then said in an eager and agitated manner, "Woman, tell me, in the name of Heaven, I conjure you tell me, who placed that jewel in your hand? who bid you give it me?"

"The same who bid me deliver to you this letter, lady," replied the woman. "I have risked much to convey it to you in safety."

"He is come then!" said Margaret, as she took the letter, and instantly concealed it within her bosom.

"He is," replied the stranger, "and would meet you at any place you may name. At the peril of life itself he desires to see you."

"Where is he?" inquired Margaret. "Surely this country must be fatal to him. Where lies he concealed?"

"That question I dare not answer," said the woman; "more lives than one rest with the keeping of that secret. He is safe for the present. Where shall I say that you will see him?"

"I cannot now name time or place," replied Margaret. "I am so engaged this day with my young companions, that it is impossible I should escape their notice."

"Then I will be his warrant," said the woman, "that he attempts to see you, perhaps, to-day."

"Good Heaven!" cried Margaret, "surely he will not venture to show himself in public! Think what may be the consequence"

"That is his own care, and not mine," replied the letter-bearer.

"Farewell, lady, I leave you."

"Stay," cried Margaret, "take this for your pains. Whoever you are, you shall not have rendered me a service so dangerous without some requital. Here, take it quickly. Be faithful, for of the peril of these things you seem to be fully aware. And say to him who sent you, that Margaret is unchanged, the same to him as ever. I must return to my companions. Adieu."

Margaret instantly quitted the woman; and, anxious as she felt to learn the contents of the letter, was compelled to delay the perusal, and once more joined her companions.

As these gentlemen were both aware that her father had quitted England on account of his political and religious opinions, and had died in much distress in a foreign land, they forbore, from motives of delicacy, to revert to the late surprise. And Slanning,


who was of a temper remarkable for its cheerful good humour, endeavoured to divert her attention by that playful flow of conversation, which, though it might be wanting in wit, was full of the vivacity of youthful spirits and thoughtless mirth.

They now pursued their way towards the farm-house, the object of their destination; passing through groves of the lofty elm and the oak, where many a graceful tree, its branches crossing the road, and uniting with the boughs on the opposite side, formed a natural arcade above the head; whilst, through the openings of the way, a view of the bubbling and sparkling Tavy gratified the eye with the most lively effects of light and shade.

At length they began to descend a steep and irregular path, which brought them into a valley watered by the Lumbourne, whose small stream falls into the Tavy. A cottage lay before their view. The rose-bush, the myrtle, and the honeysuckle grew luxuriantly about the walls; and its thatched roof appeared mantled with ivy. Near the entrance were seen two or three straw bee-hives, their busy inhabitants sporting and humming around, on the wing, to rifle every flower, and add its sweets to their store. The little stream we have before noticed, after falling over some low masses of rock, glided past the door of the cottage; and a few sheep, completely domesticated, browsed on a smooth green plot, like a lawn, that in part surrounded the house. The valley was closed in by hills richly hung with wood, from whose sides started abruptly many a majestic rock, finely diversified in form and colour; the whole combination of objects presenting a scene of exquisite beauty.

Margaret, whose feelings had been so disturbed by the late occurrence, before she reached this spot complained of weariness and indisposition; and as the party drew nearer to the cottage, one of those sudden and heavy showers so frequent in Devon, even on the finest day, overtook them. The dress of the May Queen was ill calculated to resist it; and Slanning, observing that she looked also too unwell to go farther, bid Robin Hood seek a shelter for his fair companion, whilst he went himself to the farm-house, which was still at some distance, to order the oxen to bear home the May-pole. Having said this, Slanning ran off as fast as he could to execute his purpose.

The shower increased, and John Fitz hastened on with Margaret to the cottage, where, receiving no answer to his repeated call, he raised the latch, remarking that the rain was his license for so doing; and as the mistress of the tenement had been an



old servant of the family, he was quite sure of a welcome. The cottage, however, he found to be entirely deserted; the sports of May-day having in all probability led abroad its inmates at an early hour. He conducted Margaret into the little neat room near the entrance, made her sit down, and endeavoured by every means in his power to dispel the anxiety that it was evident still preyed on her mind.

But all his attentions appeared to be offered in vain; and, unable longer to suppress her feelings, Margaret burst into tears.

"Tears! Margaret," exclaimed Fitz, as he looked upon her with a countenance full of the tenderest concern; "surely there is something more in this than the sorrow of filial affection! The strange incident of this morning, this unusual agitation—might I, Margaret, dare I ask, is there aught I could do to relieve your feelings, or to share them?"

She hesitated, and looked down; for there was a warmth of expression in the manner of her companion which implied a tenderness she feared would lead him to speak on a subject he had of late repeatedly pressed upon her. Her confusion was great; and, scarcely knowing what she said, she replied with embarrassment, "Let me pray you not to notice me; my mind has been much disturbed—you must allow some indulgence for the feelings of the orphan and the friendless."

"Friendless!" exclaimed Fitz; "Margaret, do not say this whilst I am near you. Too well you know, though you have forbid me to hope, that I would serve you with life itself, so I might but prove to you how much, how sincerely, I love you."

Margaret was silent; but her complexion changed, like the cloud of evening, from white to red; and all the tide of life seemed suddenly called up into her face and neck. "Yes, Margaret," continued Fitz, "my peace, my happiness, rest on you."

"I must not hear this," said Margaret, in extreme agitation; "I beseech you, let me go hence."

"Margaret," said Fitz, "hear me; for a moment but listen in patience. Do not shun me; this may be the last time I shall ever crave a hearing. Of all evils, suspense is the most terrible. You were wont to be candid in your nature. If I am hateful to you, tell me so, and my suit shall never more offend your ears; I shall then know my fate. I shall have certainty, though it were but another name for misery—yet were

there but a shadow of hope, what is there I would not endure to win you ?”

These words were spoken by Fitz in a manner so expressive of his deep feelings, that Margaret became even yet more agitated. She had seen little of the world ; but there is a perception natural to women of a cultivated mind, which, in an instant, detects the difference existing between the mere gallantry of a common-place suitor, and the sincere expressions of true affection ; and such Margaret felt to be that of John Fitz. As she raised her head, her eye caught sight of the anxious, the impassioned countenance of him who now addressed her. His looks spoke more than his words ; and as her hasty glance was met by his, a deep blush overspread her cheek ; her eye turned again upon the ground, whilst a tear started unbidden, and hung upon the dark lash by which it was shaded.

Fitz, with the eagerness of ardent affection, observed this, and once more emphatically called upon her to speak to him with sincerity. The agitation of Margaret increased the more she endeavoured to become composed, as the young man continued to press his suit in terms equally tender and emphatic ; and once more did he solemnly appeal to her feelings to relieve his mind from the torturing suspense under which it laboured.

At length she replied, “ I am little used to conceal the feelings of my mind, and still less could I dissemble them ; yet I know my sincerity may subject me to appear wanting in that sense of maidenly reserve which is suited to my sex and to my age. Yet surely you will not misconstrue the very candour you solicit. I am the child of misfortune ; I dare not act freely, nor dare I follow the impulse of my own feelings. Had I been placed in other circumstances, I might have——” She stopped.

“ Speak—nay, speak,” cried Fitz, impatiently ; “ tell me, might I have hoped you would have received—that you would have returned my faithful, my unbounded affection ?”

The silence of Margaret, her confusion, all confirmed the truth, and Fitz succeeded in gaining from her an avowal that she was not insensible to his love. She was, perhaps, surprised into an acknowledgment of her feelings, and the same hour that witnessed the confession of mutual affection also witnessed the mutual pledge of faith. Still the delicate and sensitive mind of Margaret appeared to apprehend that she had been too candid ; but her delighted lover answered every objection with

an ardour that showed how much he valued the hopes to which this avowal had given birth.

"Margaret," said he, "do not thus upbraid a sincerity which has given me life and happiness ; and do not suppose me capable of that ingratitude which misconstrues a conduct that I admire and revere."

"Yet do not mistake me," said Margaret ; "I will never be the means of injuring you with your family, or of rendering you wanting in duty to your father."

"My father loves me," replied Fitz ; "I will confess to him that without you he can never hope to see his only son happy or prosperous in life. He shall solicit your guardian in my behalf, and all will be well."

"But your mother," said Margaret, doubtfully.

"My mother must submit to my father's will," answered Fitz ; "and what could she desire more than to see her son united to one who will confer honour upon him to whom she gives her hand ? I know my mother's weak point, and I do not fear to meet it."

"But I fear it," said Margaret ; "I know that my unhappy father's name is despised by your mother. She will think you degraded, by having placed your affections on the orphan of a disgraced and beggared house. And, humbled as I am by fortune, I have too nice a sense of what is due to my father's memory, and to my own character, to enter a family where I should be held in contempt. I have no such dignity to boast as Lady Fitz would regard ; but the dignity of right action and of self-esteem is always within my own power ; and the hard-hearted world shall not rob me of either."

"It could not," said Fitz. "But why these doubts, Margaret ; why embitter the happiness I feel at this moment ?—Let us hope for the best.—Leave me to overcome those difficulties I may have to contend with ; and surely on your part none can exist. You owe obedience to no one but a guardian, who delights to render you happy."

"There is a cause," said Margaret ; "that is," she added in a confused manner, "there are circumstances I cannot explain to you, that render me apprehensive."

"What cause ! what circumstances !" exclaimed Fitz ; "surely you at least are free to make that choice which your own heart shall dictate ?"

"I am not free to wed," said Margaret, "without——"

"Without what?" cried Fitz, alarmed by her manner.

"Forbear to question me," said Margaret, "I beseech you to forbear. The time may come when I shall be at liberty to be more explicit: for the present, rest assured that after what has this day passed, some powerful cause can alone induce me to keep from you a confidence you have now a right to claim."

"You astonish me," said Fitz: "your words are dark, Margaret. Surely the strange incident of this morning—I know not what to think. In pity to my feelings, tell me more, tell me the worst."

"I dare not," said Margaret; "I am bound to silence by the most solemn ties. There is indeed, and heaven knows with how sad a heart I confess it, there is a mystery about my fate, which only time can clear. Yet thus much I would say for your sake, and perhaps for my own, that we may both live to rue the faith we have this day plighted to each other."

"I never can," said Fitz; "never, unless you change; and that I will not think, Margaret. What can thus alarm you, in opposition to an affection that I believe concerns your happiness even as it does mine?"

"I am not at liberty to speak plainly," said Margaret: "but thus much I may say: that were there no other cause, the ancient enmity borne by your mother to my father's blood, to his principles, were enough to crush all hope."

"No, Margaret, no," said Fitz, "that obstacle must give way. Nothing shall ever part us but your own change of heart, and that I will hope cannot be. Yet this mystery alarms me, and the more as I am forbidden to inquire into it. I thought you had no friend but your guardian; that no one existed who could influence your mind or rule your conduct, now that your father is no more."

"He is dead indeed," said Margaret, "but his influence still exists. Urge me not to say how it exists. I am the daughter of misfortune, surrounded by difficulties I dare not explain, and the time may come when I may need a friend to save me from misery."

"And you have one, Margaret, a faithful, a devoted friend," said Fitz. "I will no longer urge you to a confidence your own rectitude of mind forbids you to repose in me; but I will hope all from time and your affection."

Whilst Fitz yet spoke, he was interrupted by a noise without doors; for so deeply had these young persons been engaged in a

subject so interesting to their own feelings, that neither of them perceived the shower was passed, till their attention was now awakened by the reiterated shouts of Sir Nicholas Slanning, who, having accomplished his mission, had returned in quest of his partners in the Maying. He was instantly joined by Margaret and Fitz, and returned with them to take part in the procession that was about to form itself in honour of the sports of the day.

CHAPTER VIII.

The gallant bruin march'd next him,
With visage formidably grim,—
And laid about him, till his nose
From thrall of ring and cord broke loose.
Soon as he felt himself enlarged,
Through thickest of his foes he charged,
And made way through th' amazed crew;
Some he o'er-ran and some o'erthrew:
In haste he fled, and so did they,
Each and his fear a several way.

HUDIBRAS.

THE May-pole, thickly hung with boughs of the hawthorn, the laurel, and the holly, that grow so luxuriantly in Devon, decorated with all the flowers of spring, bound about with ribbons, its top finished with a garland like a crown, and many a silk banner streaming from its sides, was drawn triumphantly into Tavistock by several yoke of oxen, upon whose horns appeared nosegays tied with ribbons. The votaries of May followed in procession, their caps covered with hawthorn, and each bearing a bough from the "gay green wood," singing and rejoicing to the sounds of minstrelsy that preceded their steps.

As they drew near the town the procession was joined by a party of young men dressed in sad-coloured russet, their bonnets covered with ivy and yew, representing the band of Winter, headed by an old fellow, whose long white beard and grey locks constituted him no bad representative of the churlish tyrant of the year.

In opposition to this formidable array, the May Queen, attended by several young maidens, their heads crowned with flowers, led on the procession, followed by Robin Hood and his

band of archers, with Friar Tuck, the fool, the dragon, and the hobby-horse. The latter, a curious personage in this motley drama, was played by Barnabas, who was now equipped for the character, having cased himself in a mask representing a horse's head, to which was added a flowing mane, and he was also decorated with a tail of the real animal, his ears and head being hung with feathers, little silver bells, and ribbons of all colours, a species of finery which might have given rise to the vulgar saying of "as fine as the horse." To the mouth of the pasteboard mask was attached a ladle, intended as the receiver of all contributions towards the sports of the day.

The display of the hobby-horse, from the words of Hamlet, who complains that the hobby-horse was forgot, we may conclude was somewhat out of fashion, even in the time of Elizabeth; nevertheless he still kept his ground, and that too for many years, in Devon, even after he had elsewhere fallen into oblivion. His feats chiefly consisted in dancing and capering, in imitation of the cabrioles of a horse, in rattling across the stones in hobnailed shoes, and in playing off certain tricks of legerdemain, which required the brute beast to show himself human by the use of his hands.

The dragon, the constant companion of the hobby-horse, appeared also cased in pasteboard, and flourished with great effect a long gilt, scaly, tail. Such were the principal characters of the May games, who were invariably attended by the morris dancers, with caps covered with paper crowns, and hung about with silver bells, the same kind of bells being also fastened to their feet.

The procession having passed through the principal streets of the town, now proceeded up the avenue to Fitz-ford, since it was on the green lawn before that mansion that the Maypole was to be set up as the rallying point of all the diversions of the day. The church choristers walked in a body, the Latin boys followed, and right merrily did they all join in the old English chorus of "We have brought the Summer home," the welcome burden of a May-day rejoicing.

Hence, Winter, with thy locks of snow,
Depart on frozen wings,
For now the ice-bound streamlets flow,
The lark his carol sings;
And flowers uprear their lowly heads,
Freed from thy captive doom,
Each wood his greenest mantle spreads :
"We have brought the Summer home."

Hence Winter, hide thy churlish brow,
Darkness and storms away.
For bird and bee on light wing now
Sport on the hawthorn spray.
The painted butterfly is free :
And childhood plucks the yellow broom,
Weaves the wreath, and sings with glee,
" We have brought the Summer home."

Before the procession reached Fitz-ford, old Sir Hugh, Lady Fitz, Dame Glanville, Lady Howard, and indeed all those guests who had not joined the procession, came out to receive it with due honour ; and, after some respectful ceremonies paid and received, Sir Hugh took his seat under a temporary arbour, called Robin Hood's bower, to witness some of the sports of the day.

The rejoicings, however, were not confined to Fitz-ford, they were general throughout the town ; even the parish church was decorated with hawthorn, and every house displayed its livery of May boughs. Nor were the popular superstitions of the time forgotten. Some of these were peculiar to the county ; and vestiges of them still exist in the present day. Every good wife who could boast the possession of a cow failed not to hang upon the door of her dairy an ashen bough, in order to keep off the evil spirit, that the milk of her kine might be plentiful throughout the year. The wedding-ring of the last-married neighbour was thrown into the milkpail, and scrambled for by the hands of those eager damsels who were desirous to wear such a conjugal pledge themselves before the return of the next May-day. Whilst other maidens, less bold in exhibiting their wishes, but all as anxious to ascertain their accomplishment, procured a snail, and, placing it in private upon the white ashes of the hearth, watched with eager eyes its progress as it slowly crawled along, in the hope to trace in the letter it would form the initial of the hoped-for lover's name.

The archers bent their bows, and shot at a mark with a cloth-yard arrow, for the prize of a silver cup ; whilst many a hardy youth cudgelled, wrestled, pitched the bar, or ran at the ring, with a superiority of strength and skill that at all times distinguished the yeomanry of Devon ; so that Drake himself was wont to boast the men of his county as unequalled in Europe.

Sir Hugh and his party having taken their seats, the grand mock battle between Summer and Winter speedily began, to the

great delight of Sir Hugh, who really enjoyed this part of the amusement almost as much as he did his astrological studies ; since he took particular pains to descant upon it, and to prove to his auditors to what remote antiquity it might be traced.

A loud shout from the populace interrupted the remarks of the learned commentator, and announced that the onset was commenced. This onset was an attempt made on the part of Winter and his band to seize on the May Queen, whose attendant archers, or the band of Summer, instantly repelled it with vigour ; and, after a short contest, obliged Winter and his troop to take shelter in the barn at Fitz-ford, where they were to be consoled for this defeat by feasting under cover upon roast beef and plum pudding, whilst the votaries of Summer partook of their dinner under no other roof than such as was afforded by the spreading boughs, yet thinly clothed with leaves.

As soon as Winter was beaten off the ground, the morris-dancers tripped forward to take his place, and waved their silken scarfs, and jingled their bells merrily, as they footed it round the maypole to the music of pipe and tabor.

Thus gaily passed the morning ; but as a course of pleasure, like that of true love, seldom runs smooth, so neither did it on the present occasion. Many a party of young men who began in mere mirth to try conclusions at single-stick, or to wrestle and break each others' heads for mere amusement, by degrees got on from mirth to extravagance, and from thence to quarreling ; so that trials of skill at length degenerated into those of angry contest. Another cause of disturbance also occurred, which, as it had like to have ended seriously with an important personage of our drama, must not be passed in silence.

At the time of our narrative it will be remembered by many of our readers that the Puritans, then a rising sect, made a furious attack upon the sports of May-day. Several of their preachers in divers parts of England made it a rule, in order to show their zeal for the repressing of heathenish abominations, to choose that day to take their stand, exalted upon a tub or in a cart, to address the people in the open streets on the infamy and idolatry of the practice.

On the present occasion one of these zealots disturbed the high ceremonies of May-day in the town of Tavistock ; and, without respect of persons, or for the character of those honourable names who mingled in the games, thundered out denunciations of God's wrath upon them, and upon the land that sanctioned such prac-

tices. As Solomon Savegrace grew louder and warmer in his discourse, so did many of the younger men grow more and more incensed at his audacity; till at length he became so very personal in his applications of metaphor that several of the congregation suddenly rushed upon him with violence, and the bottom of the barrel set on end, upon which he stood, giving way, the preacher instantly disappeared within its capacious bowels, and the mob, turning it on its side, but for the interference of their betters would have rolled it down to the river, there to afford a cooling draught to this zealous Regulus of puritanical fame.

Solomon Savegrace, however, with some difficulty escaped this consummation of his day's work; and, being fairly driven from the field, slunk home, somewhat chopfallen, but still venting anathemas, though in a much lower tone, and merely attended by a few old men and women, who deemed it a duty incumbent upon them not to desert their spiritual instructor at the hour of his peril.

But discord, having once broken in upon the day, was resolved to keep the field; and another cause of strife, of a more serious nature, occurred. No sooner had Savegrace been driven out, than there appeared, upon the very spot where he had stood, a very different sort of person to supply his place, one no less important than the bearward of the district. In one hand he carried a staff, with a little pennon at the end of it, embroidered with the arms of the town; and, ringing a bell by way of prologue, he gave notice aloud that the contest between the dogs and the bear was about to begin.

All now hurried to the bear-garden, which stood not far from the banks of the Tavy, surrounded by a temporary gallery, and seats for the accommodation of the numerous-spectators of both sexes, of high as well as low degree. Sports of this savage kind were at this time deemed fashionable; nor will the English reader wonder at this when he remembers that Elizabeth often visited the bear-garden, surrounded by her courtiers and ladies of honour.

On the present occasion, however, several of the ladies at Fitz-ford and Margaret Champernoun declined being present, not so much, perhaps, from feeling any particular disgust at the amusement, as from a wish to recover themselves after the fatigues of the morning, in order to share the festivities of the evening mask and ball. Margaret longed also to be alone, that she might find an opportunity to peruse her mysterious letter,

and compose her spirits, after the various agitations of the day.

All the young men, however, and even Sir Hugh Fitz, found their way down to the bear-garden, and speedily took their seats. The gallery for the spectators was raised on either side the open space allotted for the contest. The lower part of this space was left open, without any barrier or pallisade. The bear was turned out, and fastened by a chain, fixed in a staple, to a large post at the upper end. Bruin was an animal of the most formidable appearance, and, according to the report of the bearward, had proved himself of unequalled skill, having killed almost every dog that attacked him in the celebrated Paris garden of London. On being first turned out, he strode forward to the utmost limit his chain would admit, raising each leg slowly, and putting it on the ground again with a rolling action of his huge and ungainly bulk.

He then stood still, shook his shaggy hide and ears, and leering round with his "pink eyes," to see if the enemy might be approaching, opened the sepulchre of his gloomy jaws, yawned fearfully, and finally saluted the assembly with a low and continued growl. At this moment the dogs were let slip, and rushing forward, yelling and barking, amidst the shoutings, clapping of hands, and encouraging exclamations of the multitude, fiercely attacked their foe.

The bear, surprised as it were by the sudden rush, paused, and then, rearing himself in a moment upon his hind legs, gave so warm a hug with his great rough paws to a large mastiff that grappled him at the throat that rib after rib cracked in his embrace; and instantly casting the animal a dead carcass at his feet he turned round, and gripped and pinched with his mouth, as he could catch them, two or three other dogs that had fastened about his body. For a moment they retreated, some unharmed, some wounded, limping, howling and lame, beyond the limits of the chain. But, having gained a breathing, and being once more hooted on to the attack, they rushed forward in a body, the van being headed by a surly one-eyed old mastiff, so thoroughly game that nothing daunted his spirit. It appeared also that he possessed the science as well as the courage necessary for war, and now practised one of its stratagems, for whilst the bear prepared to receive the attack directly aimed at him in the front, the old mastiff changed his attack, ran round to the flank, and with one bound fastened upon the bear's back. The

stratagem was well attempted, and was as ably answered, for, unable to reach his foe, Bruin prepared himself for a roll, a thing that obliged the old mastiff to quit his post of honour to avoid being crushed to death beneath the weighty bulk of the enemy.

Thus rolling, roaring, and wriggling, paws, mouth, and body all in action, the bear effectually kept the dogs at bay, having killed not less than three of them in a few minutes. A new catastrophe, however, in a moment changed the scene into one of the utmost confusion and terror; for, in the course of his strugglings, whilst rolling on the ground, the staple that confined his chain somehow or other gave way, and snapped short. Bruin, finding himself at liberty, in a moment recovered his upright position, and feeling perfectly satisfied with the valour he had already exhibited, resolved to march off without awaiting the honours of victory. With rapid strides he made his way to the end of the lists, followed by the old mastiff, who longed for another tussle, though he could now only limp after his opponent, being wounded in the left fore-leg.

Sudden terror is often the cause of sudden folly. The sight of the bear thus loose, and aroused by the irritation of the combat, struck a panic into all present; every one fancied himself already within the grasp of the merciless bruin. The women screamed, fainted, and cried out they were killed. The peasantry set off, and ran as hard as they could in all directions. Some crept under the benches, others jumped over them; but no one offered to attempt to stop the progress of the bear; the bearward having just before left the scene of action, in order to bring up another set of dogs that were held in readiness at a house near the spot.

In the interval—for the escape we have related passed in less time than will be consumed in reading it—the bear had rushed furiously out, beyond the limits of the bear-garden; every mother's son flying at his approach. The bear was in the most savage mood of a savage animal; and nothing could be more certain than the fate of the first living thing, man or beast, that came in his way.

Amongst those who were seen flying at their utmost speed was an old man, who, in spite of all his exertions, could not keep up with the younger and more vigorous. The bear eyed him, and at once marking this ill-fated wretch for his prey, turned in that direction. His long and hasty strides soon brought him within a few yards of his devoted victim. "God of Abraham

have mercy on me," cried the old man, "or I am a spoil to the bears of the wilderness! Oh, if I had but arms to defend me—he comes nearer—speed my steps, Oh! holy one of Jacob, or I am lost."

With an effort beyond what could have been expected from either his years or his strength, he kept ahead of the bear, in the hope to take shelter within a small house that stood near; but stumbling over a loose stone, he fell prostrate on the ground, and before he could raise himself again the bear was within a couple of yards of his prey, his mouth covered with white foam, his eyes fixed on the victim, and with every indication of the savage exultation with which he already enjoyed in anticipation the blood he was about to spill.

Levi, for the victim was the unfortunate Jew, shrieked—his cries rent the air; when, at the very moment he gave himself up for lost, and thought death inevitable, something whizzed through the air, and an arrow, truly aimed, penetrated the skull of the monster. A loud roar followed. He rolled over twice or thrice in the agonies of death, tearing up the ground with his teeth and claws, and then lay stiff and motionless before the object of his pursuit. Levi fell on his knees, raised his hands and eyes to heaven, but was incapable of utterance.

Whilst he was in this condition, still looking alternately up to heaven and upon the rugged animal that lay dead before him, shrinking back from it as if he feared it would again start into life, a man habited in a long garment like that of a monk, with the hood drawn close about his head, bearing a bow in his hand, advanced, and snatching up Levi by the arm as he was still kneeling, exclaimed, "Stand up, unbeliever! you are safe. Why this folly? See man—all danger is passed."

Levi saw the bow in the hand of the man who addressed him, fell upon the earth, and poured out his thanks in rapid and broken sentences, and, after the manner of his people, kissed the hem of his garment, and, had his deliverer allowed it, would have raised his foot to put it upon his own neck, as he lay prostrate before him.

"May the blessing of the God of Israel be upon thee!" said Levi: "I owe my life to the valour of thy bow and thy spear. I am a poor man, old, and of little worth; but what I can do to show myself grateful I will do, and could gold or silver be useful to thee, whilst Levi has but a shekel left, it shall be thine—at the lawful interest of moneys—that is, I mean"—he

added, correcting himself, "it shall be thine at no interest at all; in my confusion I spoke after the manner of worldly traffic. Thanks be to God, I am alive! Art thou sure it is dead, quite sure? Hast thou another shaft with thee? Yes; yes, I see it is even so. And thou, good stranger, thou, my deliverer, hast this day saved from the ruthless fangs of yonder brute, Levi, the son of Aminadab, the son of Adopijab, the son of——"

"The son of the devil," exclaimed the stranger. "Why, Levi! why man, look up! collect thy scattered senses—dost thou not know me?"

Levi did look up, as the stranger for a moment threw back his hood, and, recognising him, exclaimed, "Holy Prophet of Israel! thou art George Standwich, the man of mystery and valour. Let me take off my shoe," continued Levi, in the extremity of his gratitude, "and I will swear fealty to thee in all things, and it shall be as a testimony in Israel, and as the witness of Boaz to the elders sitting in the gates."

"Once more a truce with this," cried Standwich, "or we may both be found sitting in the stocks, or in a worse place. Rise up and follow me—dost thou forget that I am this night to sleep in thy house?"

"Wonder upon wonder," said Levi, interrupting him; "how camest thou hither in this dress? And where didst thou get the good shaft? I will gird up my loins and follow thee—oh, the good shaft! Thou hast a bow in thy hand, but I see not thy quiver."

"I was lurking in yonder woods near the archers," said Standwich, "when all of them, to a man, ran off to listen to that puritanical fellow, Savegrace, and to duck him for his pains. They left many a bow and arrow behind them at their stand. But see, the people are coming this way; say an archer saved you, but dare not to say who he was that did the deed; at night I shall be with you; admit no one to your house—till then farewell:" and, without further parley, the disguised outlaw struck down a by-path that was near and led into the woods of Fitz-park, leaving Levi to give the best account he could of his deliverance, to all whom curiosity or wonder might induce to make the inquiry.

CHAPTER IX.

This is the place, the centre of the grove,
Here stands the oak, the monarch of the wood.
DOUGLAS.


WE must now avail ourselves of the privilege of all gossips and tale-tellers, that of going back or of taking up our story at the beginning, or at the end, as circumstances may render it necessary and agreeable, either to us or the course of our narrative.

It will be remembered that Margaret Champernoun declined witnessing the amusements of the bear-garden, though in her time they were quite as fashionable as the race-course of the present day. She availed herself of the first moment she was alone to read the contents of the letter which had been placed in her hands by the strange woman, who, it may easily be guessed, was in some way connected with the outlawed miners.

After reading the letter, she very hastily removed her May-day finery; as it was not necessary she should resume her character again till the party should assemble in the hall at supper, where the sports were to be concluded by music, dancing, &c. She now threw on one of those large, old-fashioned cloaks, such as we may sometimes observe in the pictures of our great-grandmothers, and was leaving her chamber to descend the stairs when she was met by the young and lovely Lady Howard. Ellen Howard, though extremely beautiful, was something shrewish, had a good share of what is termed talent, and a still greater of what is called vanity, though in her days it was often, as it is in our own, considered by its possessor merely as a becoming self-confidence inseparable to merit. Margaret and Lady Howard were not related, but, their ages being nearly the same, and living together in the same house, they were wont to call each other cousin, "as school-maids change their names."

"And pray, cousin," said Lady Howard to Margaret, "where may you be going in that guise? Good luck! what a cloak is that for our May-day Queen! It would better become old Sir Hugh, as a muffler, when he ventures forth to meet the night air and night-spirits, at a consultation of the stars."

"I am only going down into the park—that is, not into the
t, but——"



"But in short, cousin, to some place where you do not wish me to accompany you," said Lady Howard, interrupting her.

Margaret blushed.

"Well, Mistress Margery," continued Lady Howard, with a toss of the head, "I do assure you I wish to intrude my company upon no one, as you might well perceive this morning, when I would not join you and your May-King John Fitz, and so I played a friendly part in your absence; and when the gossips looked wise, and made jests at your setting off with a couple of young men, I do assure you I took your part, and declared it was my opinion you only cared for one of the number, though they certainly did say that Mistress Margaret Champernoun liked to have two strings to her bow, as well as any marksman or markswoman in the county."

"Dear Lady Howard," cried Margaret, "how can people be so ill-natured? I am sure I thought nothing of walking to the farm-house with Sir Nicholas Slanning and Master John Fitz, who, you know, so often comes to Kilworthy to see the Judge."

Here Lady Howard coughed in that short, dry way that may be sometimes observed when one young lady does not like in positive terms to contradict what another young lady pleases to affirm.

"But people are so ill-natured!" added Margaret in a pettish voice.

"They are very ill-natured, I am sure, my dear," re-echoed Lady Howard, "and so I said the other day to Dame Basset, when she remarked that you looked about at church as if your eyes were seeking some one you wanted to meet there. I am sure, my dear Margaret, I always take your part, and I should never repeat the ill-natured things that are said of you, did I not find it was a great duty of friendship."

"I thought friendship consisted in an interchange of kind offices," said Margaret, "and I am something doubtful if such a one can be numbered in the list: but, perhaps, I am mistaken."

"Assuredly you are, my dear," continued the provoking Lady Howard, "for you know we should always wish to learn the truth; since it is the best way, as my kinsman the Judge says, to learn to know ourselves."

"I hope, however," said Margaret, "that I am not to judge myself, nor to be judged by others, by the report of scandal and malice."

"Certainly not," said Lady Howard, "and so I told Mistress Mary Kelly, when she expressed herself surprised that you should take upon you the part of the May-Queen, whilst there were so many other young ladies in the neighbourhood, who, being natives of the place, and of known respectability as to family, were more fit for it, as Mistress Kelly remarked, and ought to have been preferred. But I defended you; for, believe me, said I, Margaret means no presumption, no offence; she is quite unconscious how unfit her station in life renders her to sustain the character."

"I wish you a good morrow, and a kinder humour, Lady Ellen," said Margaret, with tears in her eyes, for she was sensibly hurt by these little ventings of envy and ill-nature on the part of her companion.

"Nay, now, dear Margaret," cried Lady Howard playfully, "I did not mean to give you pain; come, let us be like children, kiss and make it up again; for you know how angry my kinsman the Judge would be with me if he knew I had offended you: forgive me—I am sure I meant nothing."

Margaret readily forgave her friend, kissed her, and wiping the tears from her eyes, once more prepared to descend.

"And now I will show you," said Lady Howard, "that I am really in a kind mood, for I will tell you that if you are about to walk into the park to look after John Fitz he is not there. He and all the archers went out to drub that old puritanical madman Solomon Savegrace, who is preaching against the sports of May-day in the market-place. John Fitz went out just as I came up to you."

Margaret blushed again; "And why do you suppose, Lady Howard," said she, "because I am going out, that I must therefore necessarily be going to seek Master Fitz? I—I—"

"Oh, my dear," said Lady Ellen, "I only thought so, because it was evident you did not wish me to go with you, as I could plainly perceive; but if it is to look after anybody else, I have no objection. And I think I will descend into the green parlour, where I left Dame Basset with Dame Fitz, that I may be ready to take your part if they should suspect anything, and make remarks upon the imprudence of your conduct, as many ill-natured people are apt to do." So saying, Lady Howard, with a malicious smile that curled her lip, left her friend to pursue her own purpose.

Margaret, with the utmost impatience, now prepared to set

out ; she swiftly descended the stairs, crossed the court-yard, and, looking behind her at every step, lest any one should lurk near on the watch, made her way to a spot in the park called the Hunter's Oak ; a very aged tree there standing, which derived its name from some wild tradition of the county.

The spot was peculiarly sequestered, and the oak stood amidst a variety of trees, all of which had grown up and flourished since this veteran of the forest began to decay. A little sunny glade of green turf lay before it, now sparkling in all the strength of light, and rendered more brilliant by the depth of shadow which offered itself in full contrast amidst the entanglement of those thick woods that formed the background. The oak presented its bald head, crowned by a few green leaves, its scathed and decaying limbs, to the changes of summer and winter, to the mild breath of noon, or to the howling of the midnight tempest, like an aged warrior, who keeps his stand, though time, factions, and violence, rise up by turns to subdue him.

On a low bench, beneath the oak, sat a man clad in a black gown and hood, whom our readers will recognise as Captain Standwich, but whom Margaret addressed by the name of Father Oswald, with the deepest reverence of word and look. "Father," she said, as she approached him, "I have obeyed your command, though with some difficulty. I would say that I rejoice to see you, did I not know, as you have yourself so often told me in times past, that this country was dangerous to you, and that if you were taken by the government you would fall under the laws as a popish recusant. I have longed to see you, though I fear the brief space I can now afford for conference will hardly admit of my learning all I could wish to learn."

Standwich arose from his seat, approached Margaret, gazed upon her innocent countenance with peculiar earnestness—took one hand within his own, and placing his other hand upon her head, blessed her with a warmth of feeling quite in character with that profession of which, whatever might be his present mode of life, he had once been a member. He then bade Margaret to seat herself at his side, and after some few questions not very material, but which showed the kind interest he felt in her welfare, asked if she had forgotten his instructions to her when they last parted in France.

"No, truly, holy man," said Margaret, "I have not forgotten those instructions, nor the solemn and melancholy occasion upon which they were given. I can never forget the day you followed

my dear father's remains to their last earthly rest. Nor can I ever cease to remember that I was brought up to look to you as to a second father. Yet (dare I say it, reverend father ?) your fortunes, your enthusiastic pursuits in life, hitherto but darkly hinted, are to me as much a mystery as ever. I know you still but as that holy man, that trusted friend, my father so much loved, as one in whom he so absolutely confided. Something, too, he told me of you not long before his death."

"Did he so?" cried Standwich; "repeat it to me, Margaret—tell me distinctly the whole substance of his communication. It is necessary I should know it; necessary even for your sake as well as mine!"

Margaret continued: "My father told me he had something heavy on his mind—'I wish,' said he, 'I could see that unhappy man;' for so he called you. 'I wish I could see Oswald before I die: you, Margaret, you are concerned in this. There is something I would fain tell you, but I dare not do it without his sanction; and die in peace I cannot till it is told. How I wish he were come!'

"Surely, Sir," said I, 'you need consult no one in a communication that regards your child.'

"He shook his head, sighed, and said I knew not what I wished him to do. 'But thus much,' he added, 'I will tell you, lest I breathe my last before that most unfortunate man shall arrive. Oswald is near akin to me; when I am gone, you must look up to him as to a father. Remember, it is my dying command you should do so; and though I place you in England for safety, yet should Oswald seek you there, obey him as you would obey me. He will teach you to know who are your friends, and whom to avoid as the enemies both of body and soul—and in due time, Margaret, he will impart to you the fatal secret that hangs upon your birth.'"

"Holy saints and angels!" exclaimed Standwich, extremely agitated, "did he say that?" and, overwhelmed by feelings he could not hide, he arose, breathed short, paced up and down upon the sunny glade of turf, and once again resumed his seat. He clasped Margaret by the hand. His own was cold as death.

"Shall I go on?" she inquired; "I fear I distress you; yet why I should do so I know not."

"Speak, speak," cried Standwich; "I can bear it. Conceal nothing that passed; repeat the lightest word that fell from his lips, though it strike upon my heart like the dart of death."

"I was much shocked," continued Margaret, "by this intimation, since I had never suspected that there could be the least shadow of mystery about my birth. I knew my mother had died, as I was always informed, a few hours after I was born, and left me to the care of my kind, my indulgent father. He took me from England to France at so early an age that, though he carefully instructed me in my native tongue, I had lost all recollections of my country. I begged my father, in an agony of feeling such as I will not attempt to describe, to tell me more, but he would not. He made me solemnly promise him never to utter but to your ear even what he had already told me, little and unsatisfactory as it was.

"This is all I know ; the rest I need not repeat. You arrived before my father expired. You had a long and secret conference with him. I was but called in at its close ; I saw him give you that cross, as a dying token, which was to be to me the remembrance of that filial duty and obedience he commanded me to pay to you, when he should be no more. I have not, I will not forfeit my solemn promise to the dead."

"Nor to the living," said Standwich ; "you are bound to both. Are you happy, Margaret ? Is your heart as light in England as it was in France ? How does your guardian, how does Glanville bear himself towards you ?"

"I am as happy," said Margaret, "as the thoughts of other days, and the words of my dying father, will let me be—but for my guardian, he is all that is generous, good, and kind."

"Heaven be praised he is so !" replied Standwich. "And he has never interfered to seduce your mind from the faith in which you have been instructed from your birth ?"

"Never !" said Margaret.

"It is well," answered Standwich : "did he do so, I would assume the right given to me by your father ; I would remove you from his care, though the consequence might be that you shared my miserable, dangerous, and wandering life. But for one cause, my life would be worthless to me, and I have no human affections but for you. The cause I have espoused demands all my energies ! Could I but live to see that triumph, and to witness the security, the happiness of the orphan child of my dear kinsman and friend, my part in life would be ended."

"Holy father ! these are melancholy thoughts," exclaimed Margaret, greatly surprised by the singular manner in which her

father's friend addressed her. He seemed to labour under some powerful cause of painful reflection.

"I must be gone," she added; "my absence may arouse suspicion; perhaps some one may be sent to seek me out. And your safety demands our interview should be known to no one. Yet before we now part, there is a thing I would ask, if I dare ask it."

"Speak it," said Standwich; and he added, in the gentlest tone, "if I am to be held by you in the place of a father, you shall find me a kind one."

"I would solemnly conjure you," continued Margaret, "to reveal to me, if it may be, that secret of my birth to which my father alluded in his dying hour. For since that hour, sleeping or waking, his words have thrilled in my ears, forbidding peace. Might I but know this, my mind would be at rest."

"Forbear to ask it," said Standwich; "the time may come, though I say it not with certainty, when your desire may be fulfilled—yet happier, far happier, for you, should the hour never be. In the interval, study to subdue that restless spirit of inquiry, which will but lead to misery. Shun it, Margaret, as you would shun the serpent, that for his accursed guile in tempting woman to sin now crawls upon the earth."

Margaret was about to speak, when Standwich bade her forbear. "Hear me," he said, "but do not reply to me. Inquire nothing, seek to know nothing, for you know not what you seek—ask not who I am, whence I come, nor whither I go. The very beasts of the field have instinct enough to find a covert from their enemies; and I have sense as much—I can guard the vital spark that animates this miserable body against danger, treachery, and death; and though an outcast in the sight of man, to you I will be as a father, as a friend; I will watch your safety, and guide your steps. Farewell: we shall meet again—remember your promise to the dead."

Standwich pressed her hand with warmth, and walked rapidly from the spot, leaving Margaret to return to the house in a state of mind the most anxious and painful, wondering what singular connection could have existed between her late father and his friend, that should have induced him to impose upon her a command of parental respect and obedience to one whose very reason seemed to be disordered by the enthusiastic character of his passions, and by some deep and secret cause of sorrow, perhaps of guilt.

CHAPTER X.

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul.

SHAKESPEARE.

ON the evening of May-day, the knight of Fitz-ford and his lady gave a splendid banquet to their numerous friends and acquaintance who had shared in the amusements of the morning. The old hall exhibited its long tables covered with massive plate, and every delicacy of the time, whilst the blaze of light, reflected from the numerous tapers burning in silver sconces, and the chamber hung with garlands of laurel, hawthorn, and flowers, gave a brilliant and lively effect to the scene.

Many a stately dame and beauteous damsel on this night shone in all the pride of rustling silks, rich jewels, starched and widely-spreading ruffs, long waists stiff as armour, with the bulky grandeur of the farthingale. The men likewise, and especially such as emulated the court fashion in their attire, presented figures all ruff and buckram, loaded with gold ornaments and embroidery.

However, notwithstanding all the pains that were taken to make the ladies of this time look as formidable as possible, true beauty, like light, will shine out, in spite of all the clouds by which it is surrounded; so that England was then, even as it is now, pre-eminent for the loveliness of the female part of the nation.

At the festival of Fitz-ford many a beautiful face shone with the animation of mirth and pleasure, heightened by the consciousness of admiring and being admired. Amongst all the fair sex who were present, none perhaps shared so largely the latter homage as the May Queen, Margaret, who, to the attractions of a face and person really lovely, added the still greater charms of an expression sweet with modesty and innocence. Margaret, however, did not look so cheerful this evening as she was wont to do, and pleaded fatigue and indisposition as her excuse for declining to join the coranto, or to figure in a galliard, when the merry sound of pipe and tabor set every light foot dancing in the hall.

Barnabas's little boys performed their interlude of 'Oberon

and Titania' with considerable *éclat*. The schoolmaster, who had indeed composed the piece, delivered his own prologue to the audience, and with that anticipation of the success which was to attend his labours—a feeling sometimes entertained by greater dramatic poets than himself—thanked, in advance, his audience for the laurels he was about to gain.

Mike of the Mount, who, during the performance of the interlude, had sat yawning and gaping upon what was going on with a true professional contempt of those who, as amateurs, presumed to trench upon his province, soon after exhibited his own talents. He played many an air, and sang many a ballad, many a love-song to charm the ears of his attentive auditors.

Such were the amusements of this evening in the halls of Fitz-ford. Every one seem pleased, and harmony held undisturbed her sway. In short, the whole scene was by far too pleasant to bear description; we shall here, therefore, close it. Human life, in its events, as well as in its amusements, is justly compared to the ocean, on which, though we should wish to sail when its surface is calm and smooth, yet, if we contemplate it as a spectacle, we would rather desire to view it agitated by crossing billows, that foam and break against each other, awakening in the mind of the spectator that thrilling interest which causes his feelings to rise and fall with the swell of the striving waters, till he becomes agitated by those strong sensations of hope and sympathy that constantly attend him where danger and uncertainty lie before his view.

The merry-making at Fitz-ford was not confined alone to the banqueting-hall of its master. The kitchen was filled with the guests of the servants; and the housekeeper, Mistress Alice, entertained Master Barnabas, Mike of the Mount (after their dismissal from the hall), and a few select friends of her own, in her own apartment; and with quite as much importance, and a little more parade, than that with which Dame Fitz herself did the honours of the table.

After supper, as neither Mistress Alice, nor the schoolmaster, nor an ancient companion or so, were young enough to dance to tabor and pipe with those who had set-to in the full enjoyment of that exercise in the kitchen, they drew round the fire (for though the day had been warm, the evening was cold enough to make a few blazing fagots no bad addition to social comfort), and very cordially and freely entered into one of those pleasant gossips, in which the domestics of great people discuss their masters

and mistresses and their affairs, and all that does or does not concern them. The sports of the day formed also a theme of discourse.

"Master Barnabas," said Mistress Alice, "pray fill out a cup of wine, and make yourself at home; or is there anything else you would wish to make use of? I know you are a learned man, but, for all that, I dare say you don't dislike a cup of sack, or of malmsey whey; and you'll find we have both at Fitz-ford, as good as any in the county, though I say it who should not say it, since I always make old master's possets myself."

"Thank you, Mistress Alice," replied Barnabas, "the wine is good, pleasant, and sufficient; and as the juice of the grape was designed to glad the heart of man, as Homer—or, I believe, as Solomon says, it's no consequence which, seeing both are great men—I have no objection to enjoy the luscious draught which Bacchus has brought in so plenteous a store to this house."

"Craving your pardon, Master Barnabas," said the house-keeper, "it was brought by no such gentleman. Captain Noseworthy, of the Swallow, was the bearer of it; for he always brings us a *husgett* of wine when his vessel drops down the Tamar."

"I did but speak metaphorically, Mistress Alice," said Barnabas; "you might have perceived some very classical instances of metaphor in my interlude performed this evening; but I see you know nothing of the schools! How should you? for you are a woman of low degree, and *ne sutor ultra crepidam* applies to you as well as to the cobbler."

"A woman of low degree! Master Barnabas," cried the house-keeper, reddening with resentment, "now that's neither handsome nor true in you to say so. Is not Tobias Tibbs, who sits there in the chimney-corner, my half-brother? and isn't he clerk of the parish? and wasn't my father sexton here for more than thirty years? I would have you to know, Sir, that all my family belonged to the church, and that's more than some people can say for themselves, I believe, who have spent their lives in teaching A, B, C, and in whipping children's bottoms."

"That rub is designed for me," cried Barnabas, "but know, woman, that to teach youth, to instruct the mind, that better part of us, is the noblest occupation of man. Who was ever more honoured by antiquity than Anaxagoras, the tutor of Cyrus? And was not Dionysius, the king of Syracuse, a schoolmaster? And don't I teach the Latin boys in her Majesty's free grammar school of Tavistock?"

"And I'm sure, if you do teach the Latin boys, Master Barnabas," said the housekeeper, "you don't teach them for nothing—for, to say nothing of odd compliments, don't you receive from me a ham and a couple of cheeses every New Year's Day for teaching my boy Bob? But, for all I could ever find out, the lad can't yet cast up that two and two make four."

"Figures, woman! vile arithmetic!" cried Barnabas, "are utterly below the attention of a classical votary of the Muses, unless, I grant you, he be intended to become an adept in the noblest of all sciences, that of astrology; but mine is a Latin school, and summing, spelling, and such-like vulgar acquisitions, I leave the boys to teach themselves."

"Well, you know best, Master Barnabas," said Mistress Alice; "but as to your *strology*, my boy shall never learn that, for I never saw any good come of it, but a great deal of evil: only look now to our noble master."

"What! the learned Sir Hugh Fitz?" cried the school-master; "he is skilful I grant you, but obstinate, and might learn better things from those he thinks beneath him, if he chose to do it."

"That he might," said the parish clerk, who now ventured, for the first time, to put in a word, since Barnabas and Mistress Alice, both celebrated for the exercise of the tongue, had, it seemed, this evening fairly thrown down the gauntlet in a war of words. "Sir Hugh," continued Tibbs, "sees everything afar off, but nothing that lies afore his nose."

"And fears what he never sees, and never may see either," cried the housekeeper; "for all his studifying, as he does, about the stars and the mune. Why now, I remember the night young John Fitz was born—and a foul night it was as ever came out of the heavens—and as pretty a babe was John Fitz as ever came into this world. Well, and so, when my lady was taken with her pains, and I had sent Giles Barnet to run down to Mother Merriweather to bid her come up as fast as she could, for fear the child should be born before she came—which, you know, Master Barnabas, was neighbourly in me, for she might have lost her minute fees by coming too late, and we ought to live and let live, as the saying goes. Well, and so not long after Giles was gone, Sir Hugh calls me out of the room to speak to him, and he looked very much hurried, and he says, 'Alice,' says he, 'as you love your life, or the welfare of your master's house, put back the birth of the child, if it is possible, for an hour; for

there's such a position of the stars at this hour that if the babe is born afore its passed he'll come to an unhappy end, and be the undoing of his family as well as himself.' I was as much hurried as Sir Hugh at hearing this, and so I went back to my lady: but howsomever, the child was born soon after, when there was nobody with my lady but me and Betsy. And after I had dressed it, pretty dear, and was trying to make it take something to keep the wind out of its stomach, up runs Sir Hugh, bounces into my lady's bed-room, just as if she was as well as she should be, and will know exactly at what time the child was born."

"And did you tell him?" said Barnabas; "you ought to have known to a second."

"'Lord! Sir Hugh,' says I," continued the housekeeper, "'pray,' says I, 'don't be keeping such a rout here, for you'll kill my lady if you do; but if you want to know at what time the child was born, all I can tell you is, that just as the bell in the old clock-house struck twelve the blessed babe came into the world all alone by hisself, and with no help but what God gave him.' 'A bad sign,' says Sir Hugh, 'for a bold coming into life shows a bad going out of it.' And with that he went a ramping on with a great deal more such words, till I said, says I, 'You'll frighten my lady into the stericks with such bad dictions as these about her babe'—and so I got Sir Hugh out of the room as fast as I could, and then gave the child something to comfort its bowels, for it seemed to be taken with a cholic at the hearing of his father's words, though it couldn't understand them."

"And I remember," said the parish clerk, who now found it his cue to take up the tale, "I remember that same night very well, for the wind was blowing very hard, and Sir Hugh made me—for then I was one of his people, and it was not till the Whitsuntide after that he got me into the church, as Mistress Alice says—and so Sir Hugh made me go with him to the top of the old tower, and I held the lantern in one hand, and kept on master's hat with the other, for, as I said before, it blew up a hurricane, whilst he looked about him at the skies, and though it was so dark you could not see a bit of a star any more than if it had been a farthing rush-light that was gone out—and the rain beat and the wind blew, and I did the best I could to keep in the light, but down went lantern, candle and all—and I said to Sir Hugh, 'Shall I go into the hall, Sir, and get another light, that you may see what you are about in the skies?' 'No, fool,' says he, 'of what use would that be to me? We'll grope our

way down the stairs of the tower as well as we can ; but I see how it is, my boy's fortunes will be as dark and as evil as this hour, but I'll set up a scheme of *tivity* for all that.' "

"Of nativity, you mean," said Barnabas.

"Ay, ay," cried the parish clerk, "of tivity or nativity, it's all the same thing—'though,' says Sir Hugh, 'it will but break my heart if I find my boy's house as evil as I think it is'—and I said, to comfort him, that the boy had a good house over his head when he was born, and I hoped he would never have a worse: but Sir Hugh huffed me, and bid me go to the devil for a blockhead and an ass—and I did think there was other folk might keep me company if I went there, for that matter. But I said nothing, for I saw master was in a bad humour, and that something crossed him, for we all have our humours sometimes, as I observed to our parson when the white mare kicked him off into the Tavy; 'The beast is very gentle,' says I, 'but has her humours, like most she things when they are put out of sorts.'"

"And pray," said Mike of the Mount, who had hitherto only played the part of listener, perhaps from an affectation of that reserve which high people are apt to assume towards low people, when chance or ill-luck throws them into the company of each other: "pray, has any ill-fortune chanced to Master John Fitz, to verify the old knight's prediction?"

"Ill fortune to John Fitz, sweet babe!" cried the housekeeper, "ill-fortune to John Fitz? why, no; he is the heir to one of the best fortunes in the county; and there is not a family in the west of England but he may pick and choose amongst their daughters; and there's not a mother among them but courts the old folks in order to throw the young ones together. But I did hear Sir Hugh once say that the dark hour hung over his son's head like a cloud, though it had not yet burst upon him—and to be sure there may be some truth in what he says after all, for I have heard people tell that it was Sir Hugh who foretold Judge Glanville's misfortune about his daughter."

"That was a bad business indeed," said the parish clerk, and he looked very grave.

Barnabas also looked grave, it might be for company, and said, "I know but little about that affair, for it happened before I came into these parts to take the care of the Latin boys; and the people here, I don't know why, but they don't care to talk about it."

"But I know why they don't," said the housekeeper; "for

Judge Glanville, though he is now a mopish sort of a man, does much good, and spends a power of money in the place, and gives to everybody who wants help, and even if they don't want it, if they do but ask him ; so the people here look to their own interest, which is the surest way to make them hold their tongues, and a world of pains was taken to hush up that matter ; but I know more about it than anybody, I believe : ” and she gave that sort of nod of the head, accompanied with a wink of the eye, which is the sure prelude of mysterious communication.

Mike of the Mount, who, like all of his profession, was an eager listener to all the gossip he could pick up in the towns and villages through which he passed, felt an eager desire to learn this story, and plying the old housekeeper with some very civil speeches which he had at command, soon persuaded her to become communicative. Indeed, if the truth must be told, she desired to be so, but liked to have a little pressing on the subject, in order to heighten the zest of her recital.

Barnabas filled the empty cups that stood round the board, exclaiming as he did so, “ *Imple ad summum marginem*, as Horace says ; Mistress Alice, it will help you on with your story to quaff this cup of wine.” The schoolmaster handed it to her, then roused the mouldering fagots into a cheerful blaze, and once more resumed his seat.

“ We are all friends here,” said Mistress Alice, “ otherwise I should not mention what I am about to do ; for though it don't much concern the Fitz family, yet they might not, perhaps, wish it to be talked of, as the Glanvilles are so much their friends. But, as I said before, we are all friends here.”

Of the sincerity of their friendship her auditors now assured her with one voice, for curiosity, like self-interest, can, with great readiness adapt itself to all possible exigences.

“ You must know, then,” said Mistress Alice, “ that I was in former times a young woman.”

“ Truly, Mistress Alice,” said Barnabas, “ we give you full credit for that part of the story, seeing you are now an old one.”

“ Not so very old, either, Master Barnabas,” said the tale-teller ; “ but not quite so young as I used to be : well, let that go——”

“ It is gone already, if you talk of your youth,” said the schoolmaster, who carried something of dogmatic precision with him into all companies.

“ Let me tell my tale my own way,” said the housekeeper

warmly, "or tell it yourself, Master Ferule ; we are not at *scule* here, I trow ! I declare you put me out. Let me see, where was I ? O, I remember : when I was a young woman I lived first as lady's maid to Judge Glanville's daughter ; but my young mistress and I could not set our horses' heads together, for I was young, and free-spoken, and open, and she was haughty and high, and very handsome, and had strong evil passions, as it afterwards turned out, and so I left her service and came to live with Dame Fitz. And I was first her waiting gentlewoman, and so got on till I was made housekeeper, as right it should be ; for you know, Master Barnabas, people ought to be promoted in their station as the reward of their deserts, as good Master Battlebook said in his sermon preached before the Bishop of Exeter, when the living of Peter Tavy was vacant. Well, and after I left Mistress Mary Glanville to come to Dame Fitz, it seems she went to London, and there had a sweetheart that her father knew nothing about, and I have heard he was no great things as to character, and, what was worse, he had no money."

"Filthy lucre !" cried Barnabas, "never thought of by Love and the Muses. Love, Mistress Alice, is therefore represented blind, that he might not be dazzled by gold ; no bad idea that for my next sonnet."

The housekeeper proceeded : "Now, somehow or other, my master, Sir Hugh Fitz, happened to be in London too, and he learnt all about the love-affair going on with Mistress Mary, and knew a great deal about the young man, who was then a sailor or a soldier, though an officer to be sure, and so Sir Hugh told the Judge all about his daughter's secret love, and up goes Judge Glanville, though the 'sises were near at hand, and he had to sit in court, but up he goes to London, and I suppose soon settled the business ; and I fancy he thought the best way to drive out the old love from her head was to give his daughter a new one, for the next thing I heard was that she was married to the rich Sir John Page of Plymouth—a man old enough to be her father. You mind Sir John Page, I dare say, Master Barnabas ?"

Barnabas shook his head, something in the same way in which Whackum did to "stir his wit up," for he looked rather drowsy. "I remember having seen him when I was a boy at Plymouth," said Barnabas, "for Sir John was many years older than myself ; but he was hated for a miser, and every body wondered how such

a sensible, respectable man as Judge Glanville came to marry his daughter to Sir John Page."

"Why, I believe he did it," said Mistress Alice, "just as people sometimes take one ill thing to be rid of a worse, for they say he never thought his daughter safe till she was married, so much he lived in fear that her first good-for-nothing lover would run off with her, and so married she was. And a great lady, they say, she then wanted to be. But Sir John Page would never let her touch a penny but what he doled to her, like a miser as he was; and so as he grew more and more stingy, she grew more and more violent in her temper, and a dog and cat life of it they led together, till, in short, the old lover came back again, and she ran away with him from her husband."

"And the lover and the husband measured swords and fought, of course?" said Mike of the Mount.

"No, that they did not," replied Mistress Alice. "You shall hear—the old man liked her well enough for all her quarreling and haughty airs and her wickedness, and people did say he was a Christian, though he was as stingy as a Jew; and so he wished to reclaim her, and not to give her up as a cast-away. After above a twelve-month's hunting about, Sir Hugh Fitz, who acted as lawyer in the business for Sir John Page, again found her out, and he and her father, Judge Glanville, got her home again, and Page took back his runaway wife, and treated her more severely than ever, in the hope to humble and reform her. And then came the dreadful part of the story—but I don't like to tell it, for it is too shocking to repeat."

"And what was it?" said Mike of the Mount, whose curiosity was much heightened by this declaration. "Is she alive or dead?"

"Alive!" cried the housekeeper, and she shook her head, raised her hands, that were clasped together, and added, in an emphatic manner: "She died a fearful death—but there was one died more cruelly than she did, for she deserved her fate—but, poor Judge Glanville! I shall never forget when he sat upon the bench, and——"

"And what?" exclaimed Mike of the Mount.

"And passed the sentence of death upon his own daughter," said the housekeeper.*

* So says tradition in Tavistock.

"The sentence of death upon his own daughter! for what crime?" cried Mike of the Mount.

"For murder!" said Mistress Alice. "The murder of her husband."

"*Horrenda narras!*" exclaimed Barnabas. There was a deep pause in the company. A cold shudder stole over every eager listener to this dreadful tale. Mistress Alice was the first to break it, as she thus continued: "I saw Judge Glanville,"—and she wiped the tear from her eye as she spoke,—"I saw him put on the black cap as he rose from his seat. Good heavens! how he looked! he was as white as a sheet, but there was not a tear in his eye, though we all saw he trembled. Yet he pronounced, word for word, the awful sentence of the law, in a voice as clear and as deep as a bell. He did not look at the prisoner. But when he came to the words dead! dead! it seemed they sounded to him like his own knell, for then his voice failed him; yet he finished, and turning to his daughter, as he said 'the Lord have mercy on your soul,' all the father broke out at once, and in another minute he was carried senseless out of the court."

"*O calamitatem!*" cried Barnabas.

"And his daughter?" said Mike of the Mount.

Mistress Alice bent her head forward, and said in a low voice, "She was burnt alive! for to murder a husband, they say, is treason! and her poor father has never held up his head since; he is a melancholy, broken-hearted man."

"No wonder that he did not come to the May games," observed Mistress Sugarsop, the grocer's lady, who was one of the attentive friends and auditors of the housekeeper.

"Judge Glanville come to the May games!" cried Mistress Alice, "you might as soon expect to see him attend his own funeral. No, poor man, that judgment day was a thing to shake both body and soul within him."

"He sat like a second Brutus," said Barnabas; "that great man of old, who judged to death his own sons."

"I know nothing about him," said Mistress Alice, "but I am sure to have seen Judge Glanville that day, as he sat upon the bench, was enough to soften the hearts of even brutes themselves to pity him."

"I had heard," said Mike of the Mount, "that Judge Glanville was a melancholy man, and lived like nobody else; but I never before knew the cause. And pray, Mistress Alice, in

what way did Sir John Page come by his death? Had his wife any accomplices when she dealt to him such hard measure?"

"Why, that's a question I can't so justly answer," replied the housekeeper, "for there was a good deal of contradictory evidence on the trial as to that matter; and the criminal would confess nothing, for she had a firm spirit, though it was turned to evil. She had an attendant, or a waiting gentlewoman, or some such person about her, whose breeding was said to have been better than her condition, though it seemed her breeding had only taught her the better to act wickedness. This waiting gentlewoman, it was shrewdly suspected, had a hand in the murder; but she made off, or escaped, or was hid by some who befriended her, for nothing more was ever heard of her that I could make out. And as to all the particulars of Sir John's death, I shall be going to bed soon, and I'm very subject to the *navvicals*, so I'd rather not talk about them any more just now. And besides that, there was a report that got wind, after his wife was burnt for murdering him, that Sir John Page was seen alive and well, and was no more murdered than I am."

"*Fabulae!*" cried Barnabas.

"That he was seen to walk, I know very well," said Mrs. Sugarsop; "but as to being alive, the Lord help you! He was no more seen bodily alive than his wife was after she was executed; though many people used to say that she used to walk with a burning fagot in one hand, and dragging an iron chain along after her in the other, and would so rattle it every night at twelve o'clock in the morning along the church-yard——"

"But there are people," said Mistress Alice, interrupting her friend, "who would swear, upon their Bible oath, that they had seen Sir John Page alive, notwithstanding his wife was burnt for murdering of him."

"That can't be," cried Barnabas, "for the body of Sir John Page was crowned, and the jury brought in their verdict, as I have heard, against some person or persons unknown for the murder; and soon after, his wife was taken up on circumstances of suspicion, examined, tried, and executed according to law."

"Well, the Lord knows best about it," said Mistress Alice; "Sir John Page was a miser, and bad enough in his way, and nobody would have thought anything about his death if he hadn't come by it in so shocking a manner. But he's gone to answer for himself, and if he was alive, it was a cruel some act

in him to let his wife be burnt for murdering him. But we are sinners all ; and, let people say what they will, I believe it's nothing but an idle tale after all to fancy that Sir John was alive. Now, I suppose it was somebody that was very like him who was seen afterwards, for he was a well-favoured man, and had a mole on his chin and a wart on his nose, as I can mind very well. But I do no more believe the story of his being alive than I do what they tell about Edward Luggar, who they say came by his death by peeping through the key-hole of Tavistock church-door on Midsummer eve."

"That story is as true as Holy Writ," said Barnabas, "for I knew Edward Luggar very well, and knew poor Emma Gendall, to whom he was about to be married. And a foolish thing it was in her to set him a peeping on Midsummer eve through the church door—it was a tampering with sacred things, and couldn't end well ; but the curiosity of woman, as the ancient poet says—I don't at this present moment remember which of them it was, but it's all the same thing—was and is the source of all evil."

"You make very hard sayings about our *sect*," cried Mistress Alice, "and as to your poets, that you make such a stir about, I don't see what they have to do with our affairs, and if they were real gentlemen they would scorn to be looking after what does not concern them ; and as to Edward Luggar, he was a wild young man, and went after the girls instead of minding his business."

"Now, that's slander, Mistress Alice," cried Barnabas ; "he cared for no girl in the place but Emma Gendall, and he loved her dearly. I knew him well ; he was one of the ringers, and when he was buried they muffled the bells, and a melancholy peal they made."

"And his fate will never be forgotten, since I have immortalised it, by having written a ballad on the subject myself," said Mike of the Mount, "and I will sing it to you with all my heart."

"Pray do," said Mistress Alice ; "and first take another cup of wine to wet your whistle, for there's no singing with a dry throat, and I love a ballad of all things, and most specially when there is anything in it about ghosties and sperrits."

Mike of the Mount took up his harp, ran his hand over the chords, brought a few strings into tune with the assistance of

his wrest, and hemming two or three times to clear his voice, sang, with considerable expression, the following ballad of

MIDSUMMER EVE.*

Scarce sheds the moon, through rolling clouds,
A faint and flickering light ;
Long has the wearied villager
Shared the "deep sleep" of night.

Slow o'er the churchyard's lonely path
Young Edward bends his way,
Where bodies, from life's cares and toils,
Rest till the Judgment Day.

Yews, drear as death, in lengthening rows,
Spread a chill gloom around ;
Beneath the verdant vault, his steps
In startling echoes sound.

The bat, in circles o'er his head,
On leathern pinion flits,
What time, 'tis said, the wailing ghost
His narrow mansion quits.

With heart undaunted he proceeds
To where, amid the skies,
The spire uplifts his haughty head,
And wind and storm defies.

He enters now the frowning porch
That guards the hallowed door ;
And, seated on its smooth-worn bench,
Thus cons his purpose o'er.

"Here, till the hour of midnight sound,
"With patient heed I stay ;
"Such is my Emma's fond command,
"And gladly I obey.

"Long though so coy, the yielding maid
"Has smiled on my request ;
"To-morrow quits a mother's care,
"And seeks a husband's breast.

"What joys were mine, when thus she cried,
"I know my Edward's true :
"My mother and my home I'll leave,
"To live and die with you !

"By arts, which now I blush to own,
"I oft your love have tried :
"And if your courage be as strong,
"Yourself shall now decide.

* For this modern version of Mike's ballad we are indebted to the Rev.
E. A. Bray.

"Midsummer's awful eve is near,
 "When they whose hearts are bold
 "May, at the great church-door, 'tis said,
 "The train of death behold.
 "There, through the key-hole (such the tale)
 "At midnight hour, the eye
 "Sees those slow pacing through the aisle
 "Who in the year shall die.
 "Learn whether, then, the virgin train
 " (If you the sight can brave)
 "Shall lead me to the nuptial bower,
 "Or bear me to the grave.
 "For why, short joy to either heart,
 "Should wedlock join our hands;
 "If death, to pierce each heart the more,
 "So soon shall break the bands?"

Now through the sacred pile resounds
 The long, last hour of night;
 To the broad key-hole bends the youth,
 And through it darts his sight.

Bright through the windows bursts the moon,
 And pours her beams around;
 He hears, re-echoing through the aisles,
 Slow footsteps tread the ground.

Instant he sees a numerous train
 Approach in solemn pace;
 A sable shroud surrounds each limb,
 And pale is every face.

He watch'd; and, ere to aisles remote,
 The spectres slow withdrew,
 Most, if not all the ghastly train,
 The youth, with horror, knew.

Some doom'd in manhood's prime to fall,
 Some in the pride of charms;
 And mothers, with their new-born babes
 Reposing in their arms!

The feeble forms of hoary age
 Pass on with tott'ring knees;
 A cold sweat bathes his shudd'ring limbs
 When, last, himself he sees.

Another Edward meets his eye,
 And ends the horrid train!
 His breath is stopp'd, his eyes are fix'd,
 His bosom throbs with pain.

His locks are stiffen'd with affright,
 His breast distends with sighs,
 Scarce can his limbs support him home,
 He enters—falls—and dies!

Mike ended his ballad, the bell in the clock-house told in one loud stroke the hour, and proclaimed that the morning had now stolen upon the night.

"Bless us!" exclaimed Mistress Alice; "as I live, it is one o'clock—it's time to break up, or we shall be turning day into night; 'tis no hour to be out of our warm beds, and all master's guests are gone to rest, I warrant me, so 'tis but proper we should say good night and part company."

Barnabas drew his cap close over his ears, and Mistress Sugarsop cloaked herself up so completely that nothing but the tip of her nose could be seen amidst the abundance of her ruffs and mufflers. Barnabas lighted the taper of his lantern, offering his arm to the grocer's lady, whom he gallantly volunteered to squire home as far as the Church Bow. "A good night to you, Mistress Alice," said the worthy schoolmaster, "or rather a good morning—many thanks to you, my young friend, for your pretty ballad, which might have been better had you studied the Classics under me, and learnt to measure your feet. But I suppose you are a poet of nature, a poet for the people: now, as Horace says, *spernere vulgus*, that is my motto; give me the rules of art in poetry, and the applause of the judicious. The lantern is ready, a good morrow to you all—come along Mistress Sugarsop, *Domum repetamus*, come along."

Barnabas and his companions sallied forth; the rest of the guests soon followed. Mike of the Mount was marshalled by a little scullion boy, who acted as page to the old housekeeper, into the dormitory of Fitz-ford, and all the house gradually sunk into silence and repose.

CHAPTER XI.

Yon bee his straw-built hive forsakes,
 His wings o'er ev'ry flowret shakes,
 Then shuts them on the rose ;
 Although he quaff the luscious tide,
 A store for winter to provide,
 The flow'r no paler grows.

So when impell'd by youthful fire,
 Thy charms, dear Marg'ret, I admire,
 And seize the hasty kiss ;
 Thy ruby lips remain the same :
 Then why the stealth so angry blame,
 Why rob me of such bliss ?

As John Fitz, who was alike a votary of music and poetry, sat carelessly reclining in the window of his apartment, and singing the above lines on the morning after May-day, the door was so softly opened by some one who stole in, that he did not at first observe the intruder, till, on looking up, he perceived his father stood before him.

"I wish, John Fitz," said old Sir Hugh, "that you would find something better to do than to sit there, folding your arms, and kicking your heels, and singing jingling couplets and rhymes, that you learn of that young strolling vagabond, Mike of the Mount."

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied John Fitz ; "that song was my own composition."

"So much the worse," cried Sir Hugh ; "there are fools and poets enough in the world without your adding to the number. And pray what fair lady may be thought a fitting subject for your muse ?"

"Why—why, sir, lady, sir ?—Queen Elizabeth, sir."

"Queen Elizabeth !" cried Sir Hugh, "and what do you know about her gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth, that you should be making as free with her as a country fellow does with a village wench at Whitsuntide ?"

"Oh, sir, every young man now, you know, writes verses in praise of the Queen, and calls her Astrea, or Virginia, or Una, or Diana, or some such pretty term as his fancy may suggest. It's so much the fashion, that they say there's no going to court

without it, and that a copy of verses addressed to the Queen, with a well-turned compliment rounded off at every period, is a surer passport to the way of honour and reward than if he brought his genealogical tree in his hands, with a catalogue of all the heads lost by his family in the service of the Tudors."

"So much the worse, so much the worse, John Fitz," answered Sir Hugh; "but you are my son, and, as such, are to continue down to posterity the name and honours of my house; and I could, therefore, wish to see you do something better than play the fool. Not that I dislike to see in you a turn for the art of poesy, inasmuch as it hath the sanction of many great men of antiquity; Zoroaster having, as we know, amused himself in his leisure hours, as a relaxation from the more important studies of the heavenly bodies, with the composition of about a couple of million of verses. But his were verses worthy of the man—none of your love ditties, none of your cupids and stupids, which might very well go together; none of your loves and doves, and bowers and flowers. No, Zoroaster celebrated in his poems the glory of the sun and moon, the glory of the God of nature, giving to him the titles of light and splendour, heat and fire, and other lively epithets; though his meaning was afterwards corrupted by the Magi, who, taking his figures in a literal sense, taught that God himself was the central fire, and thence introduced the worship of fire among the Chaldeans, and I am decidedly of opinion that the sacred fire of Vesta was nothing more than the remains of this ancient and venerable superstition. Now, as I said—do you mark me, John Fitz, for you seem to be looking out of the window."

"I am all attention, sir," replied the young man.

"Very well, sir," continued Sir Hugh, "poetry, therefore, having the sanction of very high antiquity, to say nothing of the names of Homer, Virgil, and other writers of more modern date, poetry, therefore, is to be honoured when it is directed to an object worthy its aim and its end. And if you turn it to noble purposes I have no objection. And I could wish you to cultivate the arts and sciences also. Now if you had but wisdom enough to study astrology, my dear boy, or if you would but give up a little time to join in my researches on the moor, I should have some hopes."

"Of what, sir?" said John Fitz.

"Of what, sir?" repeated Sir Hugh, "Why, sir, that you

might acquire a little common sense, and learn to know the value of time by making a proper use of it."

"And pray, my dear father, what should I gain by astrology? or by burrowing on Dartmoor, like a rabbit or a fox?"

"What should you gain by astrology!" cried Sir Hugh. "Why the noblest of all human acquisitions, a knowledge of those mysteries which nobody can comprehend. And what is to be gained on Dartmoor! Pray Master John Fitz, let me ask you if you saw what we brought away after opening the great cairn near Wistman's wood?"

"I saw a parcel of old black broken pots and pans," said John Fitz, "and some pieces of rusty brass or iron, that had neither shape nor make that I could find out."

"Wretched ignorance," cried Sir Hugh, "and in my own son! Broken pots and pans! to call the finest specimens of British pottery (for I hold them to be British and not Roman) that ever yet was found on the moor; funeral urns no doubt—to call them pots and pans!—Old Alice the housekeeper could not have spoken more ignorantly."

"And pray Sir Hugh," said John Fitz, "of what use may they be? what do they prove?"

"What do they prove!" replied the star-gazing antiquary, "what do they prove? Why, they are undoubted proofs that pottery was known to the British people as well as to the Roman, and that funeral urns are found in their graves."

"And where else should they be found? and these are both points of extraordinary importance in the history of the world," cried John Fitz. "But come, my dear father, do not be angry with me, for though I care not a rush if the Druids made their pans—their urns I mean—of pottery or of pewter, and cannot conceive that it can be of the least consequence to me to cultivate an acquaintance with the moon or stars, except as beautiful objects in the eye of poesy, yet I should be very sorry to offend you. But we have both our pursuits, and our tastes. Leave me to follow mine, and I will promise never to interfere with yours, though the stars should threaten perdition upon my head for despising their influence."

"Alas! my son," said Sir Hugh, whose countenance instantly changed, "to hear you talk thus, it grieves my very heart. You know not upon what a subject you are thus lightly jesting. I came to you this morning to open to you my mind on certain points in which the preservation of your happiness, nay your

very life, is concerned ; and in pity to my feelings, if you have no regard to your own, I would beg of you to give an attentive ear."

John Fitz, who really loved his father, though he never would consent to become an astrologer to oblige him, saw, by the expression of his countenance, that the old gentleman was deeply affected, whatever he might have to communicate ; and, unwilling to give him pain, instantly changed his manner, became attentive, and assured his father that he would listen with the utmost respect both to his communications and his advice."

"I am glad to hear this," said Sir Hugh, "since it is in your power to remove from my mind a cause of anxiety I can no longer conceal. My son, a fatal destiny hangs over you—if it can be averted—if the fatal hour can but be passed, you may live long and happy ; but if not—I tremble to repeat the consequences that hour may bring forth. At your birth there was a fearful ascendancy—the cusp of Mars——"

"Nay, my dear sir, let anything threaten me but the stars, and I will listen with gravity! But really to make yourself unhappy about such an old woman's tale——"

"Silence!" said Sir Hugh sharply ; for though a kind and indulgent father, there were moments in which he could assume the full authority of the parent. "I command silence. Do you listen and obey. I grieve to say it, but you are so ignorant even of the very terms of art, that if I now used them you would not understand me. I shall therefore merely inform you of the result of my scheme, put up soon after the hour of your birth. All the terms of art shall be dropped, that you may perfectly comprehend me."

John Fitz gave that sort of shrug of the shoulders which indicates submission when it cannot be helped, and prepared himself to listen with attention.

"I have learnt by my art," said Sir Hugh, "that the safest course you can pursue to avoid the danger which threatens you from some great but yet unknown cause would be for you to travel till you have completed your twenty-fourth year. Since till then this country, I fear, is no safe place for your longer residence, will you travel ? will you relieve my fears by passing into Germany, where, you know, I have friends who would gladly receive and entertain you?"

The countenance of John Fitz instantly fell, and he vehemently combated the proposal.

"Nay then," cried his father, "I must fear that you entertain some *motivé*, concealed from me, that makes you so anxious to remain here: as the love of travel is natural to youth and gentle blood, I fear I must suspect to be true the tale that has been whispered into my ear, that you love Margaret, the ward of Glanville."

Thus taken by surprise, the son knew not how to answer, or to excuse himself to his father. He looked confused, and attempted some incoherent answer.

Sir Hugh shook his head. "The evil planet that hung over you at your birth," he said, "was not an ascendancy of Venus; and yet, as it indicated mischief, I might have feared that woman would have something to do with it. Alas! alas! I see how it is; love is at the bottom of the business. But this comes of your versing and your rhyming, and making songs on Queen Elizabeth! But I have found you out, and I now expect a full account of this proceeding."

"I never designed to hide the truth from you, sir," replied John Fitz. "But I am much agitated, much confused—yet you shall be obeyed; you shall know all, and learn the truth. That secret which has so long weighed upon my mind shall be revealed to you, my dear father, and to your tenderness as a parent I will commit the happiness of your only son." John Fitz then confessed the whole story of his love, represented in lively colours the perfections of Margaret, declared that, without the hope to win her, his life must be wretched; and having thus broken the ice, he now even ventured to plunge so deeply in as to solicit his father to sanction his addresses to the maiden of his heart.

In what manner this confession was received by his indulgent father must be made known hereafter. For the present we must shift the scene, and introduce the old star-gazer to the presence of another character in our drama, which obliges us, though somewhat abruptly, to close a colloquy so deeply interesting to the feelings of the youthful lover. And though this chapter is a short one, we must beg the reader's indulgence to begin another.

CHAPTER XII.

Reason, my son,
Should choose himself a wife; but as good reason,
The father (all whose joy is nothing else
But fair posterity) should hold some counsel
In such a business.

SHAKSPEARE.

JUDGE GLANVILLE, the proprietor of Kilworthy, was, at the date of our narrative, nearly sixty years old. In his person he was large and corpulent, and there was in his countenance that expression of frankness and intelligence which distinguishes an honest and intellectual character. It was to Kilworthy that, on the day after John Fitz had confessed his love for Margaret to his father, old Sir Hugh bent his steps in order to seek an interview with Glanville, the subject of which our story demands should here be made known to the reader. "You are welcome, Sir Hugh," said Glanville to his neighbour, as he entered the apartment; "it is long since we met: yet, though I am a man who lives, as it were, out of the world, still, believe me, I do not bury with myself the recollection of my friends, and am at all times rejoiced to see them, or to do them a service. How fares the lady and mistress of Fitz-ford?"

"Dame Fitz is well, I thank you, neighbour Glanville," replied Sir Hugh, "and bid me bear her challenge to you for not honouring our poor house at the May-day games. We had an interlude and some merry sports, that gave much contentment to our guests."

"I thank Dame Fitz," said Glanville; "but all sports are past with me for ever, and I begin, too, to feel the effects of time; but I am glad to see you, Sir Hugh, retain your health and vigour as well as you did twenty years ago."

"Why yes, Master Glanville," replied the old knight, "I thank God I can still stir me about without feeling much the worse for it, except when I encounter your hill here; but still I can manage it. And as for my mind, I believe my faculties are quite unimpaired, and I am quite capable of putting up a scheme to pleasure my friends, and shall be happy to do anything to

oblige you, neighbour, in that way, if you wish to take a peep into futurity. I have already, to oblige two or three of my particular friends, pointed out to them the hour of their deaths with tolerable certainty."

Glanville smiled at this friendly offer of the whimsical old knight, and said, "Thank you, Sir Hugh; but I feel no great desire to put your skill to the test, though God knoweth I am not overburdened with the love of life; but I doubt not He who gave me being will judge fitly as to the best time and manner in which he may please to resume it; I trust my life, therefore, with God, and am neither presumptuously secure as to its duration, nor too fearful as to its conclusion, knowing my bountiful Creator careth for every work of his hand. And it seems to me, Sir Hugh, that in your traffic with the stars you something encroach upon the province of the bench, since I know not there can be any lawful authority for a human being to pass sentence of death upon another, unless he be a judge or a physician. There is, however, another point of your learning and skill that I would fain make free to tax, in behalf of Archdeacon Summaster, who is at the old jars again about tythe wood, and I, knowing that you are a man more skilled in the law of *sylva cædua* than myself, would now refer to you."

"Ay, ay," cried Sir Hugh, who, in the midst of all his astrology, retained a love of his old profession, and had no dislike to see his opinion referred to as a matter of authority by a judge himself; "my learning and skill, such as they are, shall be at your service. In my work of *Fitz his Reports* you will see a very notable settlement of such a question. I know something also of the case of Master Summaster, inasmuch as a kinsman of my own is client therein. I hold that the woods in dispute are not tythable; for look you, neighbour Glanville, what says the statute 45th of Edward III. chapter 3, where the preamble goes expressly to lay a prohibition for wood twenty years old and upwards?"

"And do the woods in question come under that clause, think you?" said Glanville.

"Come under that clause, neighbour!" cried Sir Hugh; "ay, as fitly do they as my head comes under my cap, being covered and protected by the same. For look you," continued the astrological lawyer, "these woods cannot possibly be considered under the clause of *cædua sylva*, fellable wood, or wood fellable, since it was adjudged, in the 11th of Henry VI., that no wood should

be felled under the clause *cædua sylva* if it be past the growth of twelve years, for firebotes or otherwise, since it then becomes *grossæ arbores*, not *cædua sylva*. Very well; what then becomes of the paltry shift set up by the Archdeacon under the common law (will that avail, think you?) wherein he pretends to have a right to cut young sprigs out of old stocks?"

"You think, then, the claim cannot hold good?" said Glanville.

"Hold good!" exclaimed Sir Hugh, "never, whilst the statute recited exists; never, whilst there is one gown at the bar left to explain it. Such is my opinion, and such shall I leave it in writing, for the benefit not only of Master Summaster but of all posterity; moreover, adding something by way of *post scriptum*, respecting those important points of dot-trels and dormers, and how far they differ from housebote and plowbote."

In the more important studies that engrossed the mind of Sir Hugh, he seldom found occasion to give his friends, whether legal or otherwise, a taste of his old vocation; but when he did so, he generally gave them such a fire as made them not at all desirous often to encounter the attack; and nothing could stop him till the last shot was spent. On these occasions, perhaps, he might with more propriety be compared to the wheel of a jack, which stands immovable if you let it alone; but once put the spring in action, and on it goes with the utmost velocity, till it has run down the full length of the chain, and is finally stopped by its own exhaustion.

"And now, neighbour Glanville," continued Fitz, "though my kinsman would heartily wish to settle things in an amicable way with the Archdeacon, for it is his maxim, as well as mine, that *pax semper preferenda est bello*, yet, if he will go on to extremities, he must go on, and we must of necessity shoot at a prohibition; and——"

"Perhaps," said Glanville, interrupting him, probably dreading the penalty of hearing any more opinions from his friend, "perhaps you would let me know the business that has procured me the pleasure of seeing my old friend, Sir Hugh Fitz, thus early in the morning?"

"Why, yes," cried Sir Hugh; "though I fear it will be but a foolish business after all; but I am a father, and, as such, have a father's feelings for the sins and faults and follies of a child, let them be what they will."

Glanville looked much pained. This random shaft of the chattering Sir Hugh had struck him in a tender point ; it had touched a wound ever green, and, though Sir Hugh meant nothing by it, yet it was his misfortune, as it is that of great talkers in general, to follow at random the train of his own ideas, without reflecting on what may be the consequence of his idle expressions to another.

"I know what are the feelings of a father," replied Glanville, "and deeply, foully as a child may offend against the laws of God and man, yet nature will be heard ; her voice, like that of conscience, cannot be stifled ; and vainly do we try to steel the breast against either."

He spoke this in a tone of deep feeling, and with a vehemence of manner that recalled the self-engaged attention of Sir Hugh to his friend. Sir Hugh was a thoughtless and a vain man, but not of an unkind heart. A prudent man, had he consulted the most delicate means of allaying the feelings of Glanville, would have afforded him time to recover himself from the shock, and remained silent, or have given another turn to the discourse ; but Sir Hugh was as unlucky in his theme of consolation as he had been heedless in giving occasion to render any consolation necessary ; and he now said, "My worthy friend, I am sorry to see that a few words, dropped carelessly by me, should have called up any painful recollections. But, alas ! what can we say ?—what is fated, is fated. The stars never tell a lie ; and how can we contradict them, do what we will ? And you may remember I foretold something of those unpleasant circumstances concerning your poor daughter."

Judge Glanville started up, and with a look in which the agony of his own feelings was strongly depicted, as well as resentment at this abrupt and plain allusion to his daughter's fate he said, "Forbear, Sir Hugh—forbear, I beseech you. You are the only man, calling yourself my friend, who has named her to me for nearly eighteen years. You are the only man who would dare to do it with impunity."

Sir Hugh was a little confounded, and attempted to offer an apology ; but it was lost, for the wretched man who stood before him seemed at the moment to be absorbed in his own thoughts and feelings. His eye was fixed upon the ground, his hands were pressed together upon his forehead, and not a word escaped his lips ; he looked the image of sorrow and of shame. In a few minutes, however, he seemed to recollect himself, wiped

away from his eyes a tear or two that had started unbidden, and, though with a quivering lip, entreated Sir Hugh to go on with the affair upon which he came. "I will," said Sir Hugh, "I will. You know that unlucky prediction about my dear boy—about my John; who, as Dame Fitz says, now stands as the collateral branch, to bear the fruits of our ancient family down to posterity. Well, neighbour, notwithstanding all my efforts to induce the boy to travel into Germany, or elsewhere, till the conjunction of the planets that so threaten him shall have past their worst aspect (for till then I hold him not to be safe in England); yet he won't go—won't move a step—won't budge, I do assure you; but is as obstinate as his mother, when she maintains that the noble Order of the Garter originated, according to an old wife's tale, from that which dropped from the Countess of Salisbury's stocking. In short, my son's in love—in love, neighbour Glanville; and refuses to set up a scheme to guide him in his choice, though it is a thing common enough with young gentlemen of the present time."

"And pray, Sir Hugh," said Glanville, "what may this be to me, that you should thus favour me with your confidence upon the subject?"

"Why now," continued Sir Hugh, "that's coming to the point; that's the very root of the matter—the very cause why I am here; since it is on your judgment on the parties, or one of the parties concerned, that I mean to rest my determination respecting my client. John Fitz knows my weak side very well," said the good-humoured lawyer, "and, in spite of the influences that threaten him from the hour of his birth, the boy knows I can't bear to see him unhappy, that's the truth of it, and so he wheedled me into giving him a conditional consent, namely, that if you can afford us a satisfactory account of the damsel, for there seems a good deal of queerness and mystery about her, he should have my approbation to ask her in marriage, that is, when I should obtain my wife's consent to let him do so; for Dame Fitz is a very prudent, and a very discreet and dignified woman, and therefore must be indulged in her own way."

"And pray, who may be the damsel of your son's choice?" inquired Glanville; "you have not yet named her."

"Why ay, true," said Sir Hugh; "that has something to do with it; I forgot that part of the affair; but it's not very material. John Fitz, it seems, has given his heart to your ward,

Mistress Margaret; and a very pretty young woman, I must say it, she is, though somewhat uninformed, as she did not seem to know positively her own birthday, though I offered, the very first time I saw her, to give her an insight into all the miseries and calamities of her future life, if she would but let me know the day and the hour she was born. But, I must say it, Mistress Margaret is the first young woman I have met with who is thus oblivious on the subject, having generally found a failure of memory in these particulars rather amongst ladies somewhat advanced in life, and especially when they retain, like our blessed sovereign, the honours of virginity."

Glanville spoke, as soon as Sir Hugh made the least pause to let him slip in a few words. "Mistress Margaret," he said, "is in all things worthy the affection of an honourable man. If virtue, beauty, and gentleness of spirit, be merits in woman, I never yet saw one who was her equal. Her fortune is but very small: and, indeed, to be plain with you, it would not be sufficient to maintain her. But she deserves a friend; and she has one, I hope, in myself, who would never let her want protection and a home. Your son, perhaps, is aware of this circumstance of fortune."

"O, yes," cried Sir Hugh; "and though most fathers are apt to think a good dower no bad accompaniment to a wife for a son, yet, to speak the truth, neighbour Glanville, I am not the father who would put his child's happiness into one scale, and make it kick the beam by throwing a money-bay into the other. And, in my opinion, a worthy-hearted maid, with some sense, and a good temper, is fortune enough in herself for any man, unless he be a Jew or a courtier. My son shall be happy, if I can make him so; and as for money, why I have plenty of it for us both—so let that go."

"Sir Hugh," replied Glanville, "I honour the disinterestedness and generous character of your mind; and I am glad to see that in this age, when fathers look to find for their sons fortunes such as are said to be obtained from the New World, we have one man wise enough to prefer merit to interest—to consider wisdom better than gold—virtue purer than fine gold. Yet, alas! we are not always wise enough to remember this till too late." Glanville sighed deeply, and once more resumed an air of attention.

Fitz continued, "Yet there is one point on which I wish to be satisfied before I give my final consent to this business, and that point refers to the respectability of your ward's connexions. Who

is she, and of what family? The question is abrupt, but of import; as though I care not about increasing the riches of my house, yet I must not tarnish nor diminish its honour."

"My own honour is concerned in answering you plainly, and to the best of my information," said Glanville. "The truth is, I know little more about Mistress Margaret, than so far as her own personal merit is concerned, and for that I can avouch freely."

"Yet you are her guardian," said Sir Hugh; "and, as I am given to understand, almost her only friend."

"You shall hear," replied Glanville. "The late Sir Frederick Champernoun, who received knighthood from the hand of Queen Mary, was, in early life, the companion of my studies at Oxford. We were sincere friends. In our riper years, difference of opinion, both religious and politic, separated us; and, as I have since learnt, on the accession of Elizabeth, Sir Frederick fled this country. I heard of him no more, till, during his last illness in France, he addressed to me a pathetic appeal to receive his only child under my roof; as, from the disturbed state of France, he could not die in peace, and leave her there exposed to so much danger. In addition to which, the small wreck of his fortune was in England, and still encumbered with the unsettled claims of law. I received this appeal of the dying father in behalf of his child, and at first consented to take her as a temporary charge; but her own merit soon rendered her dear to me. She has been three years beneath my roof, and I feel for her that regard to which my heart had so long been a stranger."

"And is this all you know about the damsel's family and parents?" said Sir Hugh. "Who was Sir Frederick Champernoun?"

"Of a good family, I believe," replied Glanville, "from the North of England, but not connected with the Champernouns of Devon. One thing I ought to tell you (though I have never named it to Margaret, lest I should wound her feelings, since I am assured she is herself ignorant of it), that Sir Frederick acknowledged his daughter was illegitimate, and that there were circumstances peculiarly painful connected with her birth, that might be made known to me hereafter, though he did not point out by what means I was to attain such knowledge."

Sir Hugh looked much discomposed. "I am sorry to hear this," he said; "and am still more sorry to think that my son should have placed his affections so unwisely. Illegitimate!

—painful circumstances connected with her birth—may be known hereafter; doubt, secrecy, mystery! Dame Fitz will never consent to such a marriage. Why, neighbour Glanville, I verily believe that my wife would rather see her family extinguished at once than behold a bar of bastardy quartered sinister in the family arms. Illegitimate! it will never do, never.”

“I have dealt plainly with you, Sir Hugh,” said Glanville. “I have told you all I know; but surely these things cannot affect the honour of your family, since a wife receives honour from her husband, as far as rank is concerned, but gives none. Yet she does honour him, and that in the dearest point, when she confers a lustre on his name, by nobly bearing it. You have passed over fortune, pass over this objection also, and make your son happy; and I will venture to predict, that no star that ever yet shone can promise half so much good fortune to your house as you will find by gaining such a wife for John Fitz, and such a daughter to yourself. Dame Fitz will have reason to rejoice. Go home—talk to her yourself; you have the authority of a husband, and must be the ruler of your own house.”

“Pray, neighbour Glanville,” said Sir Hugh, “are you the ruler of yours? and do you really find wives so very tractable as you think mine will be?”

This question was a home thrust, since the world whispered that the present Dame Glanville, the second wife of the judge, carried matters with a high hand, both within and without the walls of Kilworthy. Glanville only answered that he, as Sir Hugh Fitz well knew, had, for some years past, given up almost all his affairs within his own family to the management of his wife, seldom mingling with the world, and spending his days in retirement and privacy.

Sir Hugh fidgeted about the room, started a thousand objections, then spoke of his son's happiness in the tenderest manner; declared he thought very well of Mistress Margaret; cursed the bar of bastardy with all his heart, and wished all the heralds and genealogists, together with the pride of families and of wives, at the devil; and, unable to fix upon any resolution in this uneasy state of feeling, had recourse to that shift of all weak and irresolute minds, namely, to take time about the affair, and let it settle itself if it could; never considering that, in the interval, he should leave his son a prey to anxiety, and exposed to the danger of allowing an affection, already deeply rooted, to twine itself still closer round his heart, as difficulty and delay invariably enhance

the value of the object of his affections in the eyes of a lover, and fan the fire of his passion, instead of extinguishing his hopes.

CHAPTER XIII.

Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be medicinal to me. I am sick in displeasure to him; and whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges evenly with mine.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE may often observe in human life a chain of small circumstances so trifling in themselves that it would be difficult to trace them in detail, and yet leading to great and powerful ends. Such may be compared to a variety of little springs or rivulets, that steal, scarcely noticed, meandering along, till by their junction they form a stream, broad, rapid, and irresistible.

Even in like manner had the trifling, but constant intercourse, the little acts of kindness and attention that had passed between John Fitz and Margaret, led to that mutual attachment, which seemed to involve the happiness of both, and which the conduct of Sir Hugh not a little encouraged by the vacillating course he now pursued. He had not the resolution to communicate the affair to his wife, nor had he the heart to forbid all intercourse between the parties; nor yet could he make up his mind to give his consent; but contented himself with admonishing his son, saying it would be better to think no more about the damsel, at least for the present. How such admonitions, and such indecision, acted upon the mind of the young Fitz may be easily guessed, inasmuch as that very day he renewed, as might be expected, his visits to Kilworthy, and his attentions to the lovely ward of its master.

Glanville, when he found that want of fortune was no serious objection in the eyes of Sir Hugh, thought the other cause of disapprobation so very weak and futile, that, well knowing the worth of Margaret, he did not doubt but that a little time would remove an obstacle, which, in his own opinion, was but of little consideration when balanced against the merits of the young lady. So far, therefore, from laying any restraint upon her conduct, he allowed John Fitz free access to his house, nor did

he watch the motions of the young people, to deprive them of those little opportunities which love knows so well how to turn to account.

As, however, there were certain persons who had a motive for putting a stop to this delightful intercourse of hearts, some of them did not content themselves with pursuing a passive conduct like Sir Hugh ; who, on all occasions of doubt, mistrust, or difficulty, consoled his mind, and contented himself with having recourse to the stars.

One evening (not very long after Sir Hugh's interview with Glanville), Lady Howard sallied forth alone, and bent her steps towards a place called the Pixies' Pool, lying within the extensive domain of Kilworthy.

The spot was characterised by that kind of beauty peculiar to the valleys of Devon. It lay between two hills, the highest of which was crowned by trees that hung feathering down its sides. The Walla, that crystal stream, immortalised by a native bard,* flowed gently with low murmurs, over the pebbles that formed its bed. On the green banks grew the purple harebell, the primrose, and tufted daisies, bending their heads before the light breath of spring, which seemed to dally with every leaf and bough that hung around. The birds that tenanted these wild brakes accompanied with their evening song the music of the waters,

Marrying their sweet notes with the silver sound.

Thus gliding forward, the Walla at length entered a rocky bed in the midst of which a deep black cavity, with moss-grown sides, formed a natural basin that received the stream, and where it lay as a still and glassy mirror. A large aperture like the lip of a cup, allowed the waters a free passage to continue their course from the basin or hollow. Thence the ground formed a gentle descent, and, being thickly strewn with masses of rock, the Walla, after passing this basin, called the Pixies' Pool, entirely changed its character, and rushed, leaping and bounding, tumultuously forward, white with foam, and dashing over every obstacle that offered an impediment to its course. On either side the rocky basin grew a small grove of trees, composed of beech, sycamore, and the weeping-willow, which gracefully

* See the beautiful episode of the Loves of the Walla and the Tavy, in Brown's *Britannia's Pastorals*.

drooped its head, and seemed to stand, like Narcissus, contemplating its own beauty in the clear mirror beneath.

The evening now drew in apace, the sun was slowly sinking below the western hills, and left, like great ones of the earth at their departure, the fading traces of a lingering glory. The heights of Dartmoor, with their mighty tors, faded in the distance ; while, from the deep valleys and their many rivers, a thick and dusky vapour slowly rose, and extended itself, like a vast curtain, over every surrounding object. The cattle lowed in the distance. The birds ceased their clamour, and winged their flight to seek shelter in their nests ; each sound of the day gradually sunk to rest, and " silence girt the woods."

At this spot and at such an hour, there stood, resting upon a portion of rock that formed a seat near the Pixies' Pool, the woman who, on the morning of May-day, had borne the token and the letter from George Standwich to Margaret. Her name—Betsy Grimal—is to this day remembered in Devon with no pleasing associations. She was famed, even in her own time, for the cunning, yet ferocious cast of her character ; whilst many of her adventures, during her connexion with the outlawed miners, form now a tale of legendary lore, to wile away the evening round a winter's hearth ; and many a listener turns pale, and in his way home shuns the spot said to have been the scene of this woman's death.*

Betsy Grimal was low in stature, but strongly limbed. Her arms, red, mottled, and muscular, looked as if she could wield a sword with as much ease as she did the hammer with which she was accustomed to break the masses of ore found by her confederates in the mines. Her countenance was harsh rather than vulgar : for this woman, though now sunk and degraded, in early life had known gentle nurture, and had received a degree of education far beyond that possessed by most of her compeers. She had a hard, sun-burnt, and bold brow ; a pair of small bright eyes, like those of a ferret, and a glance, sly and cautious. Cunning was the character of her countenance ; to which a pair of thick, black, busy eyebrows, and a quantity of hair of the same colour, that grew like mustachios upon the upper lip, added so unfeminine an expression, that had a stranger met her on the waste of Dartmoor, as Banquo did the weird sisters on the blasted heath, he might have said to her :

* Under a gateway of the abbey of Tavistock, at present inclosed within the gardens of the vicarage.

———You should be woman,
And yet your beard forbids me to interpret
That you are so.

Lady Howard approached the spot, and eagerly exclaimed as she drew near her, in a tone that evinced some trepidation, "Are we alone? Did you meet any one in your way hither?"

"No," replied Betsy Grimalbal; "we are alone, and safe from every human ear; this spot is a proper one for our encounter, for neither churl nor gentle would venture near the Pixies' Pool after sunset for the world's worth. You may speak fearlessly and frankly."

"I will do both," replied Lady Howard. "The family are this evening absent from Kilworthy, else I had not ventured at such an hour to meet you in this place. I felt I must see you, were it only to tell you that your plans have failed, and that my hopes are ruined."

"How?" said Betsy; "has the love-powder failed?"

"Talk not to me of love-powder, and such follies," exclaimed Lady Howard, with impatience; "I tell you that John Fitz loves Margaret; and not all the love-powder on earth, unless it were that which carries fire and lead with it, could move his heart, or deaden the feelings he entertains for her. He loves her, and I—I am passed over, hated, despised! Death! it is madness to think upon it. I am made but as an instrument between them when they want a third person to give some support to their meetings. Lady Howard must be the companion of their walks!—Lady Howard must share their converse! And how?—why even as a picture shares one's company. It looks flesh and blood, but neither hears, sees, thinks, nor claims any other notice or observance but that of a senseless gaze, or of a passing remark from the living being who stands before it. And must I be made such a thing as this? But let it be. It is well—very well. What care I for John Fitz, or for the woman he chooses to think fairer and better than myself? Let him go;—I have pride, if I have nothing else to console me for the loss of a boy." Thus, in a flow of violent expressions, having vehemently unburthened the rage occasioned by envy, jealousy, and disappointment, Lady Howard threw herself upon a portion of the rock, with her back towards Betsy Grimalbal, crossed her arms, and raised her head with an air of pride and resolution that seemed to shew she was in earnest in the latter part of her speech. Though the dusk of evening was fast gathering around,

yet it was not so dark but a deep flushed cheek, and a few sparkling drops, that fell like dew upon a heated soil, might have been seen if Betsy could have looked Lady Howard in the face. However, she stole nearer to her, and offered to lay her hand gently upon the shoulder of the enraged fair one, who shook her off, exclaiming indignantly, "Let me alone—I want none of your counsel—none of your help. You have brought me to this pass, and I care neither for you nor it."

"But you do care for it," said Betsy Grimal, in as softened a tone of voice as she could affect; "and if you would but hear me, all things might yet be well. Come, come, Lady Howard, learn to know your best friend. Nay, never start at the word—I can forgive an angry one from you, as I would the pettish mood of a child when it thinks it has lost its toy."

"You have deceived me," cried Lady Howard. "You first cajoled me with your tricks till you got possession of my secret—of my folly, let me say; and since that you have turned both to your own account."

"It is not so," replied Betsy. "Did I not read your destiny by the power of my art? Did I not foretell——"

"You filled my mind with a dream," said Lady Howard. "You raised before my eyes a vision of happiness that has ever since haunted my imagination; and now all ends in disappointment, and the thoughts of what is lost rise like spectres to my view. They are fearful and unnatural. You know not the spirit you have called up in my breast."

"Nay, talk not thus wildly," said Betsy Grimal; "but tell me, in plain terms, what has befallen."

"Nothing less than this," replied Lady Howard; "that old Sir Hugh Fitz, instead of being averse to his son's pursuit of this beggarly stranger, plays the part of suitor for him, and to her guardian, Glanville. How the affair is settled, I know not; but this I know, that John Fitz has thrown off even his attempts to disguise his ill-concealed affection, and now openly worships at the shrine of this goddess which he has set up."

"Is that all?" said Betsy Grimal. "That is nothing; it will not hold long."

"Not hold long," cried Lady Howard; "why every day it is more apparent. If my lady mounts her horse, who is groom to hold the stirrup?—why the heir of Fitz. If she drops her fan, who but he is the ready lacquey to pick it up? If she speaks, his ear is chained to her lips, whilst he devours every word, and

praises every idle expression of her's as the choice conceit of a rare and excellent wit. And then, if she sings, why he will sit with folded arms, and gaze upon her face in such rapt attention, that he has neither eye, sense, nor hearing but what is Margaret's. It makes me mad to think of these things. Had he followed a noble girl, one born to honour, and to rank; or of such high pretensions that I could no more compare with her than a pale and glimmering star can hope to vie with the queen of night, it would have been something less humiliating. But to be thus slighted for a low, base-born, silly girl, whose beauty is not without question, whose wit lies in cunning, and whose chief merit is pride, rank pride, trimmed up in the garb of modesty; this, is beyond my patience."

"Yet you must be patient," said Betsy Grimal; "pray be composed. Cease this war of words, and hear me. You love John Fitz,—nay, never deny it, never turn away, nor bite your lip after that fashion. Many a man plays the fool at one time in his life. Many a man may be won, who little thought he should be so, by the woman he afterwards calls his wife. Men are like birds, they are shy of the net that is spread for them; but once let me teach you how to spread it, and let my game be entangled but in the slightest thread of my meshes, and I'll so clip the wings of the flutterer that there shall be no more flight, I warrant you."

"But what can you do," said Lady Howard, "if Sir Hugh Fitz sanctions his son's choice? and how can I compel love from one who now, perhaps, holds me in hatred?"

"It is no such thing," said Betsy; "Why should John Fitz hate you?—Remember, there was a time when he thought Lady Howard the loveliest woman in all the county of Devon, till yonder minx bewitched him—and but for her, John Fitz had been your own; yet now you say he hates you. You lovers see but in extremes, and therefore fancy what is not love is hate. And as to Sir Hugh Fitz, I tell you again that he shall not consent to his son's marriage with this woman: I can command the means to prevent that."

"You command the means to prevent it?" said Lady Howard, in a tone of surprise; "you talk of preventing the marriage of the heir of Fitz?"

"The meanest agent is sometimes the most dangerous," replied Betsy Grimal. "Hath not the viper, which crawls in the dust, a sting as deadly as a lion's grasp? Both can destroy

man, though he be lord of the creation. I know a man—yet ask me not his name, nor his quality, nor wherefore it should be so; yet there is such a one, who would rather see yonder moppet dead at his foot than behold her the wife of Fitz—and yet he has a dear interest in the welfare of Margaret.”

“Who is this man?” said Lady Howard eagerly; “and by what means,—how can he prevent this?”

“He can do all; but you must ask nothing. He is one to whom these times are dangerous, and therefore he lies close. His power is large, though it is shrouded in mystery. I will seek this man; fear nothing. The marriage of John Fitz and of Margaret shall be broken, and then all I have foretold you shall come to pass.” Betsy Grimal as she spoke these words fixed her eye keenly upon Lady Howard, and observed she seemed to ponder, as if she hesitated to give her assent; however, she only said, “How can this be? Will Fitz, think you, ever forget the past?”

“I will tell you how it can be,” said Betsy Grimal. “Margaret, by her artful bearing, her seeming simplicity and affection, has won the heart of Fitz. Let me find the means to separate them, and he, no longer fascinated by her presence, will awaken from his dream of folly; the shadow on which he doated will be gone, and reason will once more master his affections. Then will we improve the occasion. His mother desires his union with you; she will make his father desire it also; and as to his love, there are means that act on the affections, though fools call them unlawful; yet I know how to furnish them. There are medicines, potent as the night-gathered hemlock—medicines that never fail. I have drugged many a bowl in my day that has defied leech and priest to destroy its effect.”

“Good heavens! what mean you, woman?” cried Lady Howard. “You have helped me to misery; would you now make me the instrument of guilt?”

“I make you neither,” replied Betsy Grimal. “If you demand my aid, you must be content to take my means. What doth it concern me with whom John Fitz should wed? What care I if he marry this woman, who will one day bring on him disgrace? Mystery already hangs about the birth of Margaret. Let the veil but be withdrawn, and shame, beggary, dishonour, will then stand naked before the view of all men. I have served you more for love than gold. It is at your own will to employ

or to discard me; though, for your sake, I should be sorry to see one thing."

"To see what?" exclaimed Lady Howard.

"To see you made the scorn of your enemies," said Betsy Grimal. "I can tell you what will chance. The tongues of the foolish never sleep; and there are those who already say, that, had John Fitz preferred you to Margaret, he would not have been despised. It may be she will herself pity you when she is the wife of the man who discarded you for her sake."

"She shall not," exclaimed Lady Howard; "by all my hopes of heaven or earth, she shall not! Her pity! You have my leave to act as you will in this business; yet I am still lost in wonder to hear one so low-born talk so largely."

"Low-born!" said Betsy Grimal; "are you sure that I am so low in birth, because I am low in fortune? Have these been times when those who sail on the broad ocean of life could always keep the helm, and drift before the wind for fortune's harbour? In youth I was housed and cared for with all tenderness; but now, nothing is left me but the sense, and that I can never lose, that I am in mind above my low estate. If I live by dealing sometimes hardly with the world, I do but pay back a debt of requital, for the world dealt hardly enough by me."

"Thus one evil follows close upon another," said Lady Howard. "You have taught your own mind to act cruelties, and to sanctify them with the name of justice, of requital. You have instilled this doctrine into me. But remember, I will do nothing, nothing more than may be necessary; I will spare even Margaret, as far as she may be spared, all unnecessary pain. She shall live. Farewell."

So saying, Lady Howard put some pieces into the hand of Betsy Grimal, and dismissing the woman, whom she employed and at the same time despised, hastily quitted the spot.

CHAPTER XIV.

These are the villains
That all the travellers do fear so much.

* * * * *
By the bare scalp of Robin Hood's fat friar,
This fellow were a king for our wild faction.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE shall now, like Harlequin in the pantomime, who but on waving his wand changes sea to land, or takes his ideal voyage from the torrid to the frigid zone, at once transport our reader from the upper regions of the earth to those which lie below its surface, deep imbedded within the bosom of our common mother. In plain English, we shall conduct him into a cave, that at the time of our narrative gave entrance to a mine rich with silver ore; for in this part of Devon, as well as in the northern district, it was once found in considerable quantities.

The scene around this mine was of peculiar beauty. The Tavy flowed rapidly along the most picturesque reaches in its course, between two hills, which rose so abruptly on either side, that in parts they resembled cliffs, broken and varied in form and colour. In other places, woods of oak hung luxuriantly down their sides. And where the soil was insufficient to admit the growth of trees, it was covered with purple heath; except where some rock arose, assuming the venerable and stately appearance of some castellated tower, and giving an air of boldness and grandeur to the scene.

On the side of the Tavy where the hill was less elevated was seen a crag, from the crevices of which started the mountain ash, and bending forward, hung above the river, which was here collected, by a ridge of massive stones (the remains of the Abbot's weir), into a broad and deep pool; soon, with a sudden descent, to become lost to the eye, and again to catch the view as some way on it pursued its circuitous course.

A small aperture in the face of the rock, shaded by the boughs of an oak that grew from the interstices, gave entrance to a natural cavern, the interior of which, by the assistance of art, was divided into two recesses, with pillars left as supporters between them. At the extremity of this cavern another aperture, so small that it could only be entered by bending the body, once

led the way, through a passage carefully concealed, to the mine of silver ore, then the object of illicit traffic—since by the law of England it was the property of the Crown. The mine which we now describe, has long since fallen in ; but the cavern, called by the name of the Virtuous Lady, may still be viewed, and the scenery about it will well reward the artist or the lover of the picturesque.

It was on the evening when Betsy Grimbal held her interview with Lady Howard, that a man of a stout and robust appearance, short in stature, but broad-set in the shoulders and chest, advanced cautiously towards the entrance of the Virtuous Lady. He was habited after a singular fashion, his dress being neither that of a landsman nor of a seaman, but a mixture of both, with some affectation of finery to boot. His doublet was of blue fustian, thickly set with small silver buttons. He wore large loose slops of murray-coloured taffeta, overlaid about the waistband with tarnished gold lace. A Cordovan boot, something the worse for wear, covered his legs ; and a hat of black velvet, with a band, and red feather stuck on one side the head, shaded a face that literally glowed with colour ; red and copper seeming to dispute which should predominate. A pair of black and curled mustachios, with a short thick beard, added by contrast to that force of colour we have just noticed, as the glow of a furnace is most brilliant when opposed to darkness. His nose might have saved, had he acted Bardolph, the cost of a counterfeit ; since it was indeed an “ everlasting bonfire light,” a very flaming brand. A buff-belt sustained a pair of pistols ; and a good cutlass that hung by his side peeped forth from under a loose watch-cloak.

He advanced without hesitation to the door of the cavern (for a rough door, formed of oak, secured the inmates from any sudden intrusion), and rapped loudly upon it with an oaken cudgel that he carried in his hand. The sound was answered by the deep-mouthed bark of a dog, which seemed stationed as a guard within the cavern ; and another of the canine race, placed at a greater distance, took up the alarm, just as one sentinel does that of another, and barked and yelped fiercely in accompaniment.

“Down there, Turk !—peace, Pero !—a curse upon your yelping throats ! Down, I say, and let me hear who it is !—Who’s there ?” continued the same voice in a louder key ; “and who are you, at such an hour as this ?”

"Open, I say," cried the stranger ; "open to me, a friend, Emanuel Noseworthy !"

The door was cautiously opened ; but as the person who acted as porter carried no light, the captain stumbled over the threshold as he entered. "A curse upon your caution," he said. "Why this place is as dark as a ship's hold. Go, bring a torch, or I shall founder against these rocks."

"Give me your hand," said the guide ; "we have parted the entry from the cave since you were here last, by some stout oaken boards ; it is but a turn, and you are safe within."

"Safe as among the breakers, I trow," replied Noseworthy. "But where is your captain, or your leader, or your—what do you call him ?"

"Here," said the guide, and turning suddenly round, at the end of a narrow passage, he led the way into the inner apartment of the cavern, where George Standwich was seen seated at a table in company with two or three other persons, and Levi the Jew. An iron lamp, hanging from the roof of the cavern, afforded a red and flickering glare of light, that gleamed upon the breast-plate of Standwich, and shewed every object around in broad masses of light and shadow, the former glowing fiery-red from the colour of the flame. The effect produced by it was forcible, but partook of an unearthly character.

On one side sat Levi the Jew, peering around with "cat-like watch," at every person and every thing, and eyeing the countenance of Captain Noseworthy with cautious curiosity, stealing a glance whenever the blood-shot eyes of that rover were elsewhere engaged. Two or three other persons of a sufficiently suspicious appearance were also seated ; and Standwich looked like a king in person and dignity amidst such a crew.

Standwich saluted the newly-arrived guest, bade him be seated, and ordered refreshments for his service. "By the light of Our Lady's brow," said Standwich, "you are welcome, man, for we have that for you to bear which must find wings over the water to let our friends know what has chanced. Where lies your vessel ? Does the Swallow float in the cove, or has she dropped down the Tamar ?"

"Dropped down to the devil!" said Noseworthy ; "why the black hulk was so shattered and beaten about yon night when the wind blew up a hurricane that I have been fain to put her into Falmouth for repair. There are some honest fellows there, who will rig, stop a leak, or new bottom a vessel without being too

curious about her. But as to going over the water with your matters at present, it will not do ; I shall not cross till all is right and tight."

"This is unfortunate," said Standwich ; "we have news that should reach the ears of Don John, and that immediately."

"Ay," said Levi, "and we have for him a goodly lading of ore at a rate lower than that of any market of Europe. The gold and silver from the New World was never so cheaply gotten. It is pure as the metals of Ophir ; I have assayed them myself in the furnace seven times heated."

"And kept the best part back, and threw copper filings into the melting-pot to make up the weight, I will warrant me," said Noseworthy ; "I know a Jew all the world over. But come, Captain Standwich, it is long since you and I have met, and a pull at a hooped pot will be no bad thing to float us into good fellowship. And as for the Jew here, give him the sops of the posset, to show that we would be liberal, and do nothing in wrath."

"I know thee, Captain Noseworthy," said Levi ; "thou wast ever as Nabal, given to wine. But I will not bandy words with thee, knowing thou art the son of the perverse and rebellious woman."

"Rebellious !" exclaimed the Captain, "who dares call me rebellious ? Say such a word again, and my weapon shall try conclusions with thy skull. Rebellious ! Grant I do trip my brig across the water and traffic with Don John, or other personages, it is but in the way of trade, and we must all live—no offence to the Queen."

"Captain Noseworthy," said Standwich, "there is no need to vapour here about your loyalty to Queen Elizabeth ; my good friend Levi is no more disposed to betray our concerns than he would be to give up his own interests to certain ruin. He has already suffered enough in the service of this heretical woman to make him an enemy both to her and to her rule."

"I have suffered in good sooth," said Levi, "even as did David when he faithfully served Saul, and was requited with manifold injuries. Like him, I have fled from service, and have taken up my dwelling with these people, even as did David when he fled to the cave of Adullam."

"Where all the rogues, thieves, and people of Gath, who lived in fear of a catchpole, joined him," said Captain Noseworthy. "Is that the comparison with which you would com-

pliment us, you Jew dog? Come, my lads," he continued, seizing upon the stoop of liquor that stood near, "here's success to all moonlight voyages by sea and land—a health to Henry Percy of Northumberland, and to the royal bird in the cage."

"To Mary, Queen of Scots," said Standwich; "I join the pledge with all my heart, and may the plans of her friends succeed to free her, and may she fill the throne of England, though every step that leads her to it should be placed upon the carcass of an enemy."

Every one present answered the pledge except Levi, who replied to it with a groan.

"Why, how now, man?" said Noseworthy; "are not thou a friend to the rule of right, to the holy cross of Rome? I thought thou wast half converted, and only wanted the blessing of a priest. That's the religion for us. We have hard lives, take and give hard blows, win dearly, and spend lightly, and think not always of the ten commandments when we put into port."

Captain Noseworthy, during this and much similar rhodomontade discourse, paid his respects so repeatedly to the flasks and flagons of good liquor which had been produced chiefly for his entertainment, that, strong as he was in such encounters, his brain became somewhat heated, and in proportion as the fumes of strong drink ascended so did his harangues grow more vociferous, his discourse being seasoned with a shower of oaths and other expressions which we omit in courtesy to the reader. Noseworthy was, in fact, one of those piratical, well-paid, and busy seafaring, land-meddling personages, so many of whom were countenanced by the powers of Rome and Spain, and who, in the days of Queen Elizabeth so frequently ended their career by decorating the gibbets of Tyburn, Wapping, and other parts of England.

Indeed, as is well known to every student of the times of good Queen Bess, the attempts made by such people were so repeated, and the number of assassins and disaffected persons continually sent into this kingdom on the most desperate adventures so great, that it could have been only by the especial interference of Providence that the queen was preserved from all their machinations.

Whilst Noseworthy was amusing himself with the wine-flagon and his companions by recounting the desperate adventures of his lawless life, Standwich finished the business he was transacting with the Jew, carrying on the conversation in a low voice;

though, from the boisterous vociferation of the pirate, and the attention of his auditors, there was no fear of interruption.

"You have dealt hard with me, George Standwich," said Levi; "my share of these gains ought to have been greater. I will tell them over again ere I pray to the God of Israel this night—but not here, for these fellows will grudge the Jew his honest guerdon. And furthermore," continued Levi, "there ought to be an allowance made me in consideration of the loss I have sustained on the coins taken by me as a part of the last payment; for, look you, there was amongst them not less than thirty testons of Edward the Sixth, stamped with the portcullis, that have been cried down in value, by proclamation, from twelve pence to six pence, and now again to four pence. Calculating the loss on the same from the original values, at which I took them, it maketh—first, deducting the six pence, and then furthermore the two pence—in the whole sum, a loss of twenty shillings and eight-pence sterling moneys, which——"

Here a loud knocking at the door again disturbed the inmates of the cave. The man who acted as porter of these hidden regions again went to answer the summons, and the clamour of the dogs was again renewed.

The person who now entered the cave formed a strong contrast to the first comer, Captain Noseworthy. He was tall and somewhat meagre, and wore, beneath a riding cloak, a shabby suit of black. His countenance possessed marks of intelligence, though every feature was as pinched and as sharp as that of a sick man just coming out of a wasting fever. He had a restless grey eye, full of animation, the pupil of which appeared to dilate and flash with brilliancy as the speaker became warm and interested in the theme of his discourse. The moment this person stood within the entrance of the cavern, he rushed towards the table and hastily exclaimed: "I bring news, great news! I have this day ridden many a long mile, and have spared neither spur nor breath to find you, Captain Standwich, and warn you. But," he added, as if recollecting himself, and looking round the cave, "are we all here friends?"

"All," said Standwich; "all here stand in the same peril. You may speak without fear. That gentleman with the red feather in his cap, who holds the flagon in his hand, is Captain Noseworthy, of the Swallow. This, my honest friend Levi, a Jew by birth, but who has as little a mind to grace the gibbet as any Christian. Captain Noseworthy, this gentleman, who

has ridden so hard to bear us intelligence, is Master Cuthbert Mayne."

"You need not tell me who he is," cried Noseworthy, "I know him well enough; why he was barber-surgeon at Launceston, and quack-salver to boot, till he took up the trade of serving Spain and the devil; and here's a health to them both, as worthy friends to sea-rovers;" and the Captain again paid his respects to the flagon, which had already made such inroads in his wits.

"And what is thy news?" said Standwich to Cuthbert. "Thou seemest to lack breath to tell it. Sit thee down—take time—wipe thy brows, for they drop tears with thy haste. Drink this cup, to wash the dust from thy throat; and then for thy tidings." So saying, Standwich handed a cup of wine to Cuthbert, who swallowed its contents at one draught.

As he returned the empty cup to the board he exclaimed in a hasty voice: "We are undone—our friends in London have failed. Champion the Jesuit, Ralph Sherwin, Lucas, Orton, Bosgrave, have been all taken, accused of high treason, and put to a shameful death, with all the horrid penalties of the law. Such has been the reward of men who looked to overturn an empire."

Standwich was for a moment struck dumb by this intelligence. He pressed his hand against his forehead, and seemed to be lost in his own reflections. Levi continued his occupation, being engaged with his tablets; the rest listened in silence; but Captain Noseworthy gave a long whistle, as if he were invoking a breeze on the deck of his own vessel. "Why then," he at length said, "if Edmund Champion, and those of his crew, have been made to dance to the tune of muffled bells,* I will warrant me the lads who shipped them over the water are in jeopardy. Pray, Master Cuthbert, can you tell me any news of one Luke Kirby, master and commander of a galliasse taken from the French, ycleped the Bonaventura? I would fain know what has been his fate, since his ship and mine have weathered many a hard gale together."

"Captain Luke Kirby," replied Cuthbert Mayne, "has been hanged, drawn, and quartered, on the double charges of piracy and treason."

* Bells were often muffled, so as to give them a dead sound, at the execution of pirates.

Here Captain Noseworthy gave a second long whistle. "And his lieutenant?" said he.

"Thomas Van Hynke, you mean, I suppose," answered Cuthbert.

"The same," said Noseworthy.

"Gone to heaven, or elsewhere," continued Cuthbert; "burnt for a Dutch Anabaptist, which saved the government the trouble of indicting him for high treason."

"He had smelt tar," said Noseworthy, "ever since he was a little boy a hand high. But I little thought they would have burnt Thomas Van Hynke like an old black pitched barrel."

"The news you bring is bad indeed," said Standwich, who had now sufficiently recovered himself to speak. "But what of Desmond? Has the Earl received the forces which the King of Spain landed in the west of Ireland?"

"The latest news received in London," replied Cuthbert, "was that the Spaniards had joined Desmond, seized a fort near the coast, torn down the banner of Elizabeth, and erected that of his Holiness instead. But Grey, Earl of Wilton, very soon dispersed them, and not a man was left to tell the story of his defeat."

"I see how it is," said Standwich, greatly agitated, "we are ruined for want of combination. What matters it if a party rise in Ireland, whilst another in the North or the West of England is but thinking of preparation? And whilst our gallant friends in London adventure their lives, and lose them; here I lie, hidden in the earth, tampering with churls, working on the minds of outlaws, so that they may join our cause heart and hand when the discontented faction of the West shall rise in arms, and he who I thought would take the field to lead them on is now losing time and occasion by tampering with the dotard citizens of London. Death! it is past bearing. I looked on Sir Thomas Morley as our own, and he comes not near us. I must leave England; I must warn our friends in France, in Spain, in the Low Countries, of these failures. One bold and daring blow must be struck, or all our hopes will wither one by one."

"For the present you had best fly indeed," said Cuthbert Mayne, "since it has been proclaimed that all jesuits, seminary priests, and others holding, at any time, orders under the Bishop of Rome, who may be found within these realms forty days after the proclamation, shall become liable to suffer the penalties of high treason."

"I care not," said Standwich. "If I fly, it will not be from fear; but in the hope that, by present flight, I may become more useful hereafter. If the forfeit of my life could assist the cause in which I am embarked, if it could be the means but once more to plant the triple cross in England, and give Mary of Scotland freedom and a throne, I would frankly cast it down, and hold it worthily spent."

"Nay, now, for my part," said Captain Noseworthy, "I am not a cock of that feather. If I can turn out the queen of clubs to bring in the queen of hearts, well and good. If there must be fighting, why bring us broadside to broadside, and I say well and good again. But as for laying down my life, and hanging and quartering, rather than do this, why I would let your Scotch queen, and Don John, and Don Philip dance to the devil in a coranto together, and make my Swallow spread her wings, sky-scrapers and all, for the service of Elizabeth."

"You serve Elizabeth!" said Cuthbert Mayne, in a tone of contempt, to the half-drunken captain, "you, who are known for a pirate throughout the four seas."

"You lie," cried Noseworthy; "lie in the throat for a foul-mouthed railer. I am a free gentleman sea-rover, and one who in his day has seen as many parts of the globe as there are points in the card. Elizabeth will gain, as I may say, a polar star for her navy, if she gains me—and so, here's her health, for she is a brave old girl after all, and manages to keep her head above water, and to countermine and blow up her enemies as fast as they lay a train for her."

"You are drunk, captain, to talk thus," said Cuthbert, "else your words were an insult in this place."

"Nabal is his name, and folly is with him," said the Jew, "and Nabal's heart was merry within him for he was drunken with wine."

"What's that you say, old Isaac?" cried Noseworthy.

"I did but repeat a verse of holy writ," replied the Jew, "seeing that in Scripture there is much written to show us what is wicked as well as what is good, that we may despise the fool and babbler when we meet him."

"Do you mean that for me, you bundle of old clothes and money-bags?" cried Noseworthy. "Be civil, or I'll break your head."

"Pshaw!" said Cuthbert Mayne, "have done with this bragging, and tell us when thy vessel will be in readiness to bear

Standwich across the seas. He must once more seek our friends abroad, whilst I beat up the game in the west."

"Better take a turn at thy old vocation, Master Cuthbert," said Noseworthy; "beat up thy lather of soap in thy barber's basin, and once more hang out thy signal of the long pole and red ribbons, to denote shaving and bleeding done within; better this than to meddle with things that will bring thee to the gallows. Why, Standwich, man—Standwich! thou art so busied in thy crazy plots that thou hast drunk, man, as princes wed, by proxy, and I have quaffed thy potion and my own, too; yet we are all sober, saving that the Jew there is as drunk as a Christian, and can't stand steady."

"I drunk!" said Levi, "I have tasted but one cup of thy canaries, tempered with the waters of the fountain, since the sun-rising to the sun-setting of this blessed day. My thoughts were with the hopes of our people, and employed in considering how many shekels so poor a man as I am could give towards building again the temple of Solomon."

"Thou art no Solomon, Jew, thyself," said Noseworthy, "for how wilt thou build temples, who have no corner of the earth that can be called thy country? Keep thy money, old Sheva, and spend it in a more Christian-like way. Give a candlestick to the altar of St. Nicholas. Or, if thou hast no heir, endow a caravansera, as they do in the east, to supply thirsty travellers, like me, with ale and sack. Come, be generous, old Levi; be a generous Jew, and I will give thee the kiss of peace." So saying, the drunken captain, in the extremity of his humour, attempted to rise to give Levi a brotherly hug; but, being unable to stand steady, he reeled and caught hold of the back of a settle: "What a sea is running to-night!" cried Noseworthy, "and I have been ashore so long that I have not yet found my sea legs. Oh, thou most drunken Jew! how thou dost reel and stagger before my eyes! Standwich—Cuthbert—State ministers—cut-throats—great amongst the little, and little amongst the great—ye are all as drunk as landlubbers need be. Bear a hand and help me to lie down, for my head and my legs are somewhat totty. Give us t'other cup for a night-cap. Levi count your beads, and, Standwich, don't forswear bacon, and you'll both be in a right way for saints: and so I say, a good morrow to you all."

The drunken pirate was led off to a couch composed of moss and dried fern, in another recess of the cavern. Soon after,

Levi, who also was to pass this night in the rock, retired to his pallet, and composed himself to rest : whilst Standwich and Cuthbert Mayne, and one or two others in their especial confidence, held council as to the management of their desperate affairs.

CHAPTER XV.

O, it is monstrous ! monstrous !——
Methought, the billows spoke and told me of it ;
The winds did sing it to me ; and the thunder,
That deep and dreadful organ pipe, pronounced
The name of Prosper.

SHAKSPEARE.

STANDWICH at length retired to a separate cell, formed still deeper within the recesses of the cavern. He entered it alone, placed the lamp which he carried in his hand upon a small table, and then proceeded to examine his pistols, which he constantly kept near him during his hours of rest. Having found that all was in readiness, he next carefully deposited his papers in a small box that stood within a niche cut in the side of the rock, where also might be seen his crucifix, writing materials, and a few books.

The news which had been communicated to Standwich by Cuthbert Mayne was of a nature to excite every energy of his enthusiastic character. He saw the dearest hopes inspired by that religion, for which he was so zealous, fearfully shaken ; whilst many of his secret friends and adherents, who, like himself, were ready to lay down their lives to restore the captive Mary, and to place her on the throne of England, had completely failed, and had perished miserably. Still his active and daring mind was not to be daunted, either by present failure or future difficulty, and he turned his thoughts to form new schemes for action, and, as a preliminary step, to arrange the mode of his departure, so that he might communicate with those treacherous foreign powers, who sent so many miserable agents into England to stir up strife and hold intelligence with the disaffected.

In this anxious frame of mind, Standwich at length threw himself upon a couch composed of dried fern and moss, and, without removing any part of his apparel, except the iron

casing of his breast, cast his cloak over him, and endeavoured to sleep. But nature refused to afford him quiet rest. Frightful visions haunted his pillow. At one moment he fancied himself engaged in a tumult, where he was beset on all sides with enemies desirous to take his life. At another, he fancied he saw a female form, who beckoned him to follow her ; but, whenever he attempted to do so, eluded his pursuit, till, when he at length came up with her, and would have clasped her to his bosom, she became a skeleton in his arms. Then again he was at sea, and the drunken pirate was by his side, swearing and brawling ; the ship was tossed by a tempest, and he tried to gain the boat to save himself, but could never reach her. Something white floated near him, the waves came rushing on, and cast it at his feet ; he stooped to take it up, and on uncovering the object found it to be a child stained with blood. He struggled in his sleep, and at length cried out " Margaret ! Margaret ! spare the babe ! strike the guilty, the child is innocent ! "

Standwich awoke, looked wildly around, and, filled with a confused and undefined sense of terror, snatched up one of the pistols from the head of his couch, and, seeing a dusky figure bending over him, not knowing who the intruder might be at such an hour, presented the instrument of death. His arm was instantly and forcibly arrested, and ere he could be sufficiently recovered, or even awake, to act with sure effect or to learn the cause of this intrusion, he was disarmed. This was the work of a moment ; and the person who dealt thus unceremoniously, laid finger upon lip to enjoin silence. Standwich once more became himself, collected his disturbed senses, and recognised his midnight visitant as Betsy Grimal. He asked her for what purpose she sought him at such an hour.

" For none that is good," said the woman. " For when will aught but evil pass between thee and me, George Standwich ? A curse dogs us both, in spite of our hardened spirits. Who sleeps in the cave yonder, snoring like a churl after a day's ploughing ? "

" It is the pirate captain," replied Standwich. " He came here to-night when you were absent."

" The better for you that he is at hand," said Betsy, " if his vessel too be in readiness. And who sleeps yonder among the bean-stalks ? "

" Levi, the Jew," answered Standwich : " he brought hither to-night the silver ore that he has refined for our people, that it might be ready for the foreign market on the first opportunity to

convey it abroad. It was too late to turn him back ; at cock-crowing he will depart."

"They sleep as sound," said Betsy, "as if I had mixed their potions. Rise up, George Standwich ; I have news for you, which, possibly, you will not like to hear."

"Speak it, woman," answered the outlawed rebel ; "I will not rise, I will rest me here the while."

"You will not rest there, I tell you," said Betsy Grimal, "for my words shall strike fire from thy sluggard soul."

"What mean you, woman ?" inquired Standwich. "Has the sheriff obtained information of my lurking place ? will he be down upon me with a warrant from the Council ? I care not, I am prepared for resistance. Who is my enemy ?"

"It is thy old, thy worst enemy thou hast to fear," replied Betsy. "Has Sir Hugh Fitz any place in thy memory ?"

"Ha !" exclaimed Standwich, and he started up hastily and continued, "What of him ? Curses be upon his name—I would I could for ever forget it."

"He will speedily give you new cause to remember it," said Betsy, "since it should seem he is about to wed his only son, John Fitz, to thy daughter."

Standwich shook with emotion at hearing this startling intelligence, and as the light of the lamp gleamed full upon his countenance it showed it haggard, and white as death. He glared upon the woman who stood before him with strained eyes, and, compressing his lips together, said in a tone deep and tremulous with passion, "Do not utter such a sound, do not call her by such a name, as—my daughter ! lest these rocks rend asunder and fall upon our heads. Yet I have done much to appease the anger of heaven ; and there are saints whose prayers I have invoked for mercy. But Fitz, ay, Sir Hugh Fitz, was it not of him you spoke ? that apostate, that enemy of God and man ; he who has made me what I am, an outcast and a villain ; and for whose sake I have vowed a bitter oath of vengeance—you spoke of him ; what was it ? say on."

"Margaret loves his son," continued Betsy Grimal, "and is beloved by him. She will become his wife, the wife of John Fitz."

"Have I not said it shall not be ?" exclaimed Standwich ; "and yet," he continued in a milder tone, "why should I shackle her free will, or why render her wretched, knowing, as I do, how soon the miserable become the guilty ?"

"Even so did Sir Hugh and Glanville deal by you, Captain Standwich," said Betsy Grimal; "they first broke your true affection for Mary Glanville, hated you, trampled on you, and married her to old Sir John Page for his gold. It was Sir Hugh Fitz who poisoned the mind of Glanville against you, else what chanced had never befallen you. But we had a dear revenge, and paid them a black debt, in coin that bore upon it the curse of Cain."

"Peace, woman!" said Standwich, "would you rouse me to madness by these recollections? I have not forgot the past, and need not to be goaded with remembrances that strike fierce agony into my soul. I have not forgot my own injuries, though years have rolled between me and the gulf they opened. Each circumstance lives in my memory as fresh as at the hour it was acted, to curse me; yet my thoughts are as sound now as they were then—my feelings as acute, my shame as deep, my wrongs as heavy, and my hatred ten-fold deeper. That at least has grown with time, like usury when it doubles the first debt. I want no recollections to be pressed on me to make me act as a man. How know you that these things which you tell me are true?"

"Lady Howard," said Betsy Grimal, "whose wealth might win princes to become wooers, and who has sought my services—she told me all; and she has the means to know all, and that truly."

"Could I have believed," said Standwich, "that the vengeance of heaven would have prepared for me a scourge like this, I had never consented that my child, that Margaret, should have been given to the care of Glanville. Yet what could I do? Outlawed in England, a price set upon my head, bankrupt in fortune, without a home, and in danger of the laws that here hourly threaten me with death, where else could I consent that she should be placed? France was a scene of civil strife and bloodshed; my kinsman, Sir Frederick Champernoun, on his death-bed, as poor and almost as friendless as myself; there was not a man on earth but Glanville with whom he could have prevailed to shelter the head of Margaret from the impending perils that hung over her. But how little did Glanville dream, when he consented to the charge, that it was the child of his own daughter, who, in the innocent person of Margaret, came helpless to his bosom. And now must I step in to dash the cup of happiness from her lips, even as it was dashed from mine?"

"Remember!" said Betsy Grimal. "Would you have your child take to her bosom the son of him who brought you down to shame, to misery, and anguish?"

"Cursed woman," cried Standwich, "be still—do not urge me to a deed of horror; do not make me, as you have been, guilty of——"

"Of what?" said Betsy. "Why shudder? speak out."

"Of murder!" said Standwich, and he looked blank with horror as he spoke.

"Ay, of murder!" re-echoed Betsy Grimal; and she struck one hand within the other, and continued in a tone of exultation, "Yes, it was I—it was I who helped the deed—the miserable wretch whose life was in his gold, who would have grudged to a dying fellow-being the comfort of a drop of water to cool his thirst, but that the clouds send rain at no man's cost. Yes! that sordid wretch, who used his wife like a slave, and me, her attendant, like the slave of a slave; I did help him to his coffin, and the earth itself looked greener and fresher to my view when it was no longer trodden by his foot. But wherefore upbraid me with the deed? Remember that if I and my miserable mistress laid the hand of death upon Sir John Page, the means by which we did so were of thy own devising."

"Out of my sight!" said Standwich, "leave me. I know not if it be permitted by heaven, but you have this night called up such remembrances, such shadows of guilt before my sight, that my very soul is filled with horrors: I could be dangerous—a word would make me——"

"What would it make thee?" said Betsy, in a tone of defiance. "Ay, snatch up thy pistol; add another murder to the catalogue of thy daily crimes, 'twill be a new subject for penitence. And let thy next crime be the death of her who even now watches over thy head to shelter it from justice. But look you, George Standwich, ere you attack the she-wolf, beware her fangs. I will not die tamely. I am armed as well as thou art." She drew forth a pistol as she spoke, from under her cloak, cocked it with the utmost deliberation, and, pointing it to Standwich, said in a marked tone of irony, "Come, prepare, say, who shall have the first fire? I can take aim as steadily as thou."

"I am a fool," said Standwich, "thus to bandy words with a woman. Put up your weapon, I design you no harm; my thoughts were bent on a being more loathed in my own sight

than thou art ; I thought of George Standwich when I spoke of death."

"Think of him then as you should do," exclaimed Betsy Grimbal. "Leave these vain regrets to snivelling priests. Talk no more of death ; leave him to batten on his household spoils, and remember it is the living who do good or evil ; it is the living who can curse, who can avenge—it is the living who can hope to overturn a kingdom. I will talk to thee of these detested rulers of the land, of Sir Hugh Fitz—that is a theme to rouse thee."

"To-morrow," said Standwich, "to morrow ; I will hear no counsel till then."

"But I will counsel you," continued Betsy ; "I have bought the right to counsel you at no common price. Remember, it was by serving you with Lady Page that I became a partner in that ruin which overtook you both. In civil society I had nothing to hope ; my life was in danger, and I took shelter amongst the lowest wretches that burrow, like beasts, within the earth. I persuaded these people to receive you, when every door was closed against you. I have watched days and nights when danger has lurked near you ; and once, at the peril of my own life, I stood between you and death. Have I not the right to give you counsel?"

"And what counsel would you now urge?" said Standwich. "What is it you would have me do?"

"Revenge yourself on Fitz," said Betsy Grimbal. "Contrive some means to destroy the hopes of his son ; that will be as a sharp iron, ten times heated, piercing through his heart ; Fitz lives but in his son. Render him miserable, and you destroy the father. Margaret must never be his wife ! And, if all other means fail, let thy own hand do the work."

"Fiend !" exclaimed Standwich ; "you, who look neither woman nor man, would you have me again satisfy my resentment at the price of blood?"

"No," said Betsy ; "not till all else failed. Sir Hugh Fitz has been the cruel persecutor of thee and thine ; will you, then, suffer this affection to thrive—this marriage to go forward between his child and yours?"

"No," said the outlaw ; "my blood shall never mingle itself with that of Fitz, though I should forfeit life in the attempt to prevent it. Let me think. The plan is dangerous, yet there is no other. I will adventure it ; and if that fail, I would rather

see her dead then wedded to the son of one so hated. In a few days I quit this coast, to return, I trust, with better hopes, once more to plant the banner of Rome within these realms—to free the Scottish queen—to join her friends heart and hand, and lead her on to triumph. In this cause I live, else what were life to me, who can find no peace on earth, and scarcely dare to hope for it in heaven?”

“Your hopes of heaven!” said Betsy Grimal; “strife, bloodshed, and rebellion are your hopes. Well, it may be so, with those of your faith. The followers of mine look to find peace as well as you after death; but our hopes are more secure, they rest in that long, dead sleep, which shall hear no trumpet call to judgment.”

“Infidel!” cried Standwich; “hold thy peace, lest the rocks fall on thee to crush thy blaspheming head.”

“No, no,” said Betsy; “they are too firmly set in the bosom of this harlot earth, that embraces all who take refuge in her arms. I have been better taught than to fear the shadows of superstition.”

Whilst Betsy Grimal thus addressed Standwich, he stood with folded arms in deep meditation, completely absorbed in the subject so pressed upon his attention by this cruel and infamous woman, who had been to him for many years like an evil genius, that hovered near to tempt him to sin and misery. His mind seemed now to turn upon the thoughts of his daughter, as he half-spoke, half-murmured, in a low voice, “Never, whilst I have breath, she shall never know the fatal secret of her birth. I will have one pure spirit my friend, one with raised hands to lift her voice to heaven in holy prayer, and invoke mercy on the name of George Standwich. No, my dear child, cast like a helpless blossom in a fatal hour into this bleak world, shall still flourish fresh in her native innocence. May heaven forgive me my deep sins, and pour its blessings on the head of my guiltless child.”

Soon after he looked up, and his eyes encountered those of Betsy Grimal, who stood watching his countenance with an expression in her own of the most cunning penetration, her dark eye glimmering beneath its deep black brow, like a coal kindling into fire.

Standwich started at observing the sinister expression of her countenance, and exclaimed, “I see it, woman. You watch the moment of returning passion—call it frenzy if you will—to work me to the murder of my enemy, but it shall not avail. I will act

as a man, as a father, but I will not touch a hair of Fitz's head in bodily harm. Begone—no more.”

Betsy Grimalbal retreated, and the miserable man, torn by a conflict of evil passions and half-repentant feelings that by turns mastered his mind, now threw himself once more upon his couch, and vainly endeavoured to find rest.

CHAPTER XVI.

Old age laments
His vigour spent. A chosen few
Alone the sport enjoy, nor droop beneath
Their pleasing toils. Here, huntsmen, from this height
Observe.

SOMERVILLE.

THAT passion for the chase, so beautifully described in the poem from which we have extracted the above lines—a passion at all times inherent in the bosom of Englishmen, reigned in full vigour in the breasts of the gentry and yeomanry who inhabited the neighbourhood of Tavistock at the date of our narrative.

From the earliest times it appears to have been a favourite diversion in this county, not neglected even by the church ; a hunting-seat being in existence at the present day which was erected by the Abbot of Tavistock, in order to afford him the enjoyment of so invigorating a recreation after the less lively and somewhat monotonous duties of his station. Morwel House—for so was this hunting-seat called—is situated near the far-famed rocks of that name.

The building is of stone, and in the pointed style of gothic architecture, quadrangular in form, with a gateway much resembling that of the Abbey of Tavistock. It lay embosomed in the midst of venerable trees ; and, though now a solitude in every sense of the word, was once the scene of social festivity, when the merry monks left all penance behind them within the abbey walls, and gaily sallying forth at the notes of the horn, prepared to run down the dappled deer, upon whose fat sides they promised themselves an ample refection, shouted and whooped with glee, as the woods rang with the clamour of blowing the stag to bay, or the triumph of the mort-note.

When the abbey was dismantled, and the monks driven out

by Cromwel, Earl of Essex, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, that prince bestowed the abbey lands on the Earl of Bedford; so that Morwel House became the property of the Russell family. It was by their indulgence that it was now inhabited by Sir Nicholas Slanning, who, young, active, and reckless of danger, enjoyed with peculiar delight the exercise of the chase. On the day after the event recorded in our last chapter Sir Nicholas was to pursue his favourite sport in company with Sir Hugh Fitz, his son John, and several of the neighbouring gentry.

The dew lay glittering on the grass, the air was scented by the balmy breath of morning, and all nature presented that fresh, clear, and lively aspect which seems to speak her welcome to the "sweet hour of prime." Whilst the carol of the woods made every spray vocal, as the feathered tenants soared through the air, and joined in one universal melody of rejoicing, sufficient to awaken some sympathetic feeling even in the coldest breast. Through many a deep glen, by many a thick coppice, and over many a rugged height did the hunters now pursue their sport, the hounds uttering those intermitted and doubtful cries that showed their prey was yet uncertain.

The fox, after vainly seeking covert, hard pressed by the hounds, at length broke away at full speed, in view of all the sportsmen, and, sweeping down the brow of a steep hill, made towards the banks of the river, where, driven to desperation by the close pursuit of the dogs, he dashed at once into the stream, and swam across it.

There was a moment's pause, till the veteran huntsman who led the van, giving the rein to his horse, and cheering on the dogs, sprang into the Tamar, to follow the fox on the Cornish side of the river. The dogs followed, though not with equal rapidity. Some, indeed, speedily crossed, bounded on shore, and their distant baying proclaimed they had followed hard upon the track of the wily fugitive. Every straggling huntsman now came up, summoned to the spot by the repeated bursts of the bugle that rang far along the banks of the river, and were returned from rock to rock in a clear and continued echo.

All, save one hunter, determined on crossing the Tamar in pursuit of the chase, and that one was Sir Hugh Fitz, who, though fond of the exercise, and still, from his vigorous and lusty age, able to share in it, had no inclination to venture upon an attempt that was only fitted for the young, hardy, and bold amongst the sportsmen. He suffered them all, therefore, to

take the water, and as soon as he had witnessed some who with ease made good their passage and landed, and others who were floundering and curveting, in infinite danger of being upset or overwhelmed, both man and horse, in the river, Sir Hugh quietly turned the head of his own beast in the opposite direction; but, still feeling an interest for the sport, though he could no longer share in it, resolved to observe its progress, and went forward to take his own station on the bold projection of Morwel rock, a station so commanding that he could with ease behold from thence the course of the chase amidst the opposite hills of Cornwall.

The scenery around the path followed by Sir Hugh was of a nature truly grand. It consisted principally of bold and towering rocks, here and there rising almost perpendicularly. At length he entered a deep and narrow glen, through which rushed in tumult a little foaming torrent, that seemed to fret itself against every obstacle which arose to impede its course towards the river. The path wound near it under a canopy of verdure, formed of trees whose roots started from the interstices of the rock, and appeared to be so slightly supported by any covering of earth that every fibre was visible as they strayed and wandered over its surface. At the extremity of the glen, the path ascended abruptly on the very brink of a precipice; and though the torrent could no longer be seen its roar was still audible, and for a time even increased in sound, as if it burst from some concealed cavity near the spot.

Sir Hugh, with considerable caution, pursued the ascent; and the sure-footed animal he rode paced on, carefully picking his way, and avoiding both the extremity of the precipice and such loose stones as would render his footing precarious. Between the trees that lay before him Sir Hugh could discover, as through a moving trellis, the deep blue sky; whilst summit after summit of the neighbouring heights appeared and were lost in succession. At a turn in the path he quitted the precipice, and entered a wood so thick that for some time nothing but the trunks of oak trees, with their long arms covered with moss and festooned with ivy, could be seen, till, on a second turn, he suddenly reached the bold projection of Morwel rock, where a prospect alike abrupt, unexpected, and magnificent, presented itself to the eye.

Morwel rock rises several hundred feet above the Tamar, that flows at its base, and though its apex is beautifully

crowned with woods, its jutting extremity lies bare, without so much as a single branch to intercept the imposing scene around. Looking to the left, from its verge arise from the bosom of deep woods, rocks piled on rocks, of a magnitude little inferior to its own, broken into cavities of the most picturesque forms; some portions of their surface deep and dark, whilst others, brilliant in light, lie covered with purple heath and wild plants. Half-way down, looking to the north, appears a thick coppice, now intersected with a watercourse to a mine, which from this elevated height seems to run like a glittering thread of silver through the landscape. Rising from the midst of the coppice is seen "Chimney rock," its pointed pinnacle bearing some resemblance to such an object. The lower part of it also, when viewed from beneath, somewhat resembles the gable end of a house; and, as it is much covered with ivy, the similitude to an artificial structure is the more striking.

Below, the eye, after contemplating with a feeling of awe the wide expanse of air between, at last rests upon the Tamar, which, forming a beautiful reach, wanders magnificently onward, till, many miles hence, it falls into the sea, dividing in its course the opposed banks of Cornwall and Devon; the former, from this station, marked by no leading feature, but presenting that pastoral scene of meadows ever green, so truly English, with the little church of Calstock on a bold eminence, and a cottage or two dispersed here and there, as a lively contrast to the verdure of the fields; whilst on the other side, Devon rises in the full grandeur of its stupendous rocks, and seems to look down upon the river at its base, as a sovereign who receives tributary homage from the waters that crouch at its feet.

From the heights of Morwel, every living or moving thing looks but as a speck, as a very atom in the landscape. The sheep are seen to browse on the Cornish side like so many dots on the hills, and the boats, with their white sails glittering in the sun, as they glide along the surface of the Tamar, appear diminutive as the barks of fairyland. One remarkable feature that may often be noticed is that contest of flame and smoke occasioned by a custom peculiar to these counties, the burning of bate, as it is called; a mode of manuring land, known elsewhere by the name of *denshiring*, evidently an abbreviation expressive of the county where it is employed. Looking towards the north, the picturesque arches of New-bridge, the distant woods of Blanchdown, and hills that at the evening hour almost lose their outline

in the blue horizon, close in the scene. Sublimity and beauty are so happily blended that the mind receives sensations of awe, mingled with delight, while pleasure is not overpowered by fear, as amid Alpine wonders, but is raised to that higher feeling which results from contemplating natural objects of sublimity.

Sir Hugh, on gaining the wood at the summit of Morwel Rock, dismounted, and tying his horse to one of the trees by the bridle rein, determined there to leave the animal, whilst he watched the direction of the hunters from the bold brow of the rock we have just attempted to describe. Finding himself somewhat fatigued with his morning's exercise, he threw himself upon a portion of stone covered with moss, that formed a convenient seat, and looked around him with a mind by no means insensible to the beauty of the scheme, yet, at the present moment, too much engrossed with the interest he felt for the sportsmen to give himself up to a contemplative mood.

Whilst thus he sat, he heard the distant baying of the hounds, caught now and then a view of the huntsmen, as they emerged, like moving atomies, from a copice, or wound round the brow of a hill, their diminished forms sometimes but partially seen, and at others fully visible as they cheered on the deep-mouthed pack to the notes of the "spirit-stirring" horn.

Having watched for some time the progress of the chase, Sir Hugh at length heard steps behind him. He started, and on turning his head to see who might be the intruder, beheld a man of athletic form, wearing a morion on his head and a corslet of steel upon his breast, armed both with sword and pistols. The figure stood still, remained silent, but fixed an earnest and impressive look on Sir Hugh.

The worthy knight, who was by no means prepared to encounter such a formidable apparition, instantly recollected, to add to his uneasiness, that there was no means of retreat, as the stranger stood between him and the narrow pathway which led into the wood. On every other side lay the fearful precipice.

Deeply did Sir Hugh now censure in his heart the folly which had caused him thus incautiously to venture on such a spot alone. And so wholly was he unnerved at the moment, that, had he stood on the verge of the precipice which was near him, the slightest breath of air might have upset his equilibrium, and have consigned him to the abyss below. For some time, the formidable stranger seemed to enjoy, with a malicious triumph, the terror he had excited, till at length Sir Hugh

mustered sufficient courage to rise from his seat, and made an effort to pass on toward the wood. The stranger intercepted his progress, and motioned with his hand that he should remain where he was.

Sir Hugh had recourse to expostulation, and said in a mild tone, "Friend, if such you are, I would entreat you to let me pass into yonder wood. There I have tied up my horse, and my people will be here to look for me; my business is not with you."

"But mine is with you," replied Standwich, for it was the outlawed captain who spoke. "I have watched for you, I have traced your steps hither, and on this spot you shall hear me—listen, then."

"I—I—I cannot," stammered out Sir Hugh, "I can no longer tarry. Let me pass on. This detention is contrary to law, and liable to the penalty under the proclamation of her gracious Majesty——"

"Fool!" cried the Captain, "of what avail are laws here?—Talk of thy proclamations and penal codes to the kite and the carrion bird, that shall find their prey on what is left of thee, should I but put forth my strength and cast thee hence into the abyss below."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed Sir Hugh, who in his terror forgot that he was now of the Reformed Church, "you would not dare—you could not do such a deed, and that to a poor old man who has never injured you."

"Be not too sure of that," replied his opponent; "I have dared to do things that you may hear of before we part. They may be a warrant I could do others. And as for injuring me, there lives not the wretch on this accursed earth who has injured me as you have done; and yet I have been the butt against which every worldly villain has sent a shaft. But fear not—my purpose is not against thy worthless life!—I have no desire to cut short by violence the nearly wasted thread of thy remaining days. It is only resistance that would make me use the power I possess. Sit there, old man—ay, on yonder stone; there lies the dark gulf—thou hast no mind to leap it; for age, dotard age, clings as fondly to this world of folly as the greenest youth. There lies the gulf behind you, and here I stand before you, George Standwich, armed, and in full remembrance of the past."

"Great God! George Standwich!" exclaimed Sir Hugh,

and he turned pale as death while he spoke. "Is it possible? Do I behold George Standwich, who escaped——"

"A charge of murder," said the outlaw, supplying the close of Sir Hugh's sentence, which from terror he had suppressed as it was about to drop from his lips. "Yes, and more than that. In me you behold a man so miserable, that nothing but the privilege he has gained, as the right of misery, to curse, to hate, and to requite mankind, could make him endure to live, to inhale the common air that is rendered hateful, since it is poisoned by the breath of man. I am most wretched."

"These words are dreadful," said Sir Hugh, who felt some relief to his personal fears from the tone of deep melancholy in which Standwich spoke, for he knew well that men, when about to commit an act of violence, are seldom capable of any feeling that approaches to the softness of sorrow—"dreadful indeed. I am not your judge, George Standwich; my life is at this moment wholly in your power. Let me pass, and fear nothing from our interview this morning."

"You shall not pass," cried Standwich; "I came hither prepared to meet you—prepared to read the catalogue of those injuries you have heaped upon my head—to repeat to you the crimes that owe their birth to you, and to warn you of a consequence that may be fatal to you and yours, whilst I point out the only means to shun it."

"The past is past," said Sir Hugh, greatly alarmed. "Why renew old grievances? I meant you no ill when I did what I conceived to be my duty to my friend, and to the common cause of justice—of humanity."

Standwich laid his hand on his pistol, as Sir Hugh once more attempted to pass him. The knight suddenly stopped, and as if calling up a degree of spirit that had before apparently deserted him, he said, "I will hear you, George Standwich; but I will not thus be governed by fear. I am an old man; shed my blood at your own peril. God is with us both, though the eye of man is far off. I am a sinner; but fitter, perhaps, to render up my account, on a sudden summons, than you are."

Standwich, struck by the only mark of real courage Sir Hugh had displayed during the meeting, as well as with the truth of the observation, dropped his pistol, placed his hand on the shoulder of the old man, and looking him full in the face, with an aspect in which frenzy seemed to contend with grief, said, "But for thee, I might have been, as thou art, happy, and un-

stained by the guilt of human blood. Have you not injured me? Who was it first discovered to Glanville my honourable affection for his daughter? Who interfered to induce him to separate us? You—you did this. Who advised her fatal marriage with Sir John Page, a wretch, sordid and miserable? You did this; and when those fiends that lie in wait to tempt men to their own perdition—those accursed spirits that stir up the soul to madness, lawless love, passion, jealousy, revenge,—prompted me to seduce the wife of Page, and to bear her from him, who but you found out our retreat, and, after twelve months of guilt, tore her from my arms, to restore her, stained as she was, to those of a husband? You—you did this, and more than this. Who accused her? By whose means was she brought to a public tribunal, and there convicted of murder? You were that accursed wretch.”

“So help me God,” said Fitz, “before whose tribunal I must one day stand, as well as that unhappy woman, I did nought but what seemed to me my duty. The evidence I gave in court was true. I deposed to nothing but what I saw and heard. The signal given by you, when you threw the sand against her window, was distinctly heard by me, as unseen I lurked near you. The words also that you exclaimed, ‘*For God’s sake hold your hand,*’ and the answer made by your paramour from the window above, ‘*It is too late, the deed is done.*’ These words I heard, and to these I deposed in open court; they were true. And if by them the criminal met her doom, it was by the judgment of heaven, of her country’s laws, and from no private enmity of mine. Did she not say the deed was done?”

“She did, she did,” cried Standwich, whilst a convulsive shuddering seemed to pass over his frame. “The crime was great, but oh, the penalty of it was terrible! She perished at the stake for the murder of her husband; and thou,” he added, again relapsing in fury, “thou didst bring her to it. It was thy act that lighted the fatal brand, else she might have lived. It was thy accursed spirit, active for evil; thy busy, meddling, legal skill, that collected facts, brought forward evidence to make one wretched woman yield up her soul in the midst of the horrors of the burning pile, to fill mine with endless tortures—and yet they tell me that I was the cause—the tempter—the fatal source of all. I fled, to save my name the stain of perishing as a common felon. For fame is dear, even to the damned; else why do so many perish with a denial of the very guilt for

which they suffer ? What must be life to me ? What death ! What an hereafter ! But it is not of this I would speak," continued Standwich ; " my misery can never end. And one of its fatal fruits will survive to curse me, even when I am in the tomb."

" I hope not," said Sir Hugh ; " and though you may hold my opinions heretical, yet thus much I can truly say, in the brotherhood of common charity, that I trust your miseries will end with your days ; that the pains you have suffered here on earth may spare you those of an hereafter. Yet this hope can never reach you unless you renounce a guilty life. You have cause to thank God for one mercy, that you will leave no creature belonging to you to survive your shame."

" You have touched a chord," said Standwich, " with a rude hand, that awakens a dreadful note in my bosom ; one creature still survives, who owes to me the sorrow of an existence that must be branded with infamy. The child of our sin, the miserable offspring of adultery and murder, is still in being."

" Good heavens !" exclaimed Fitz, " can such a wretched creature breathe as the child of the guilty Lady Page and of George Standwich ?"

" She lives," cried Standwich, " the child lives. And how will thy proud heart swell with indignation when I tell thee, Sir Hugh, that she is like to bear thy name, to become the cankered branch from which the honours, or say the shame, of thy house must descend to posterity ! Margaret, the ward of Glanville, the betrothed of thy son, thy only son, is my daughter."

This last communication so effectually overpowered old Sir Hugh, that he could only reply to it by raising his eyes to heaven, and faintly exclaiming as he did so, " Is it possible ? can this be the fatal secret of her birth !"

" It is the fatal truth," said Standwich. " Ay, shudder ; so will all mankind when they look on Margaret, and know her as the child of a murderess ! Who would wed Margaret, think you, thus disgraced, thus branded from her very birth ?"

" Not my son," said Sir Hugh. " I have but one son, the prop of my age, and the hope of my name. In him, flourishing like the green bay tree, I hope to see branches thicken around me in a happy posterity. But rather than see the blood of my house mingled with such pollution as thine, rather than that I would consent to follow John Fitz, all young and promising as he is, to the tomb ; and then lay me down a desolate old man, to wait in

sorrow till my glass had eked out the few remaining sands of life."

"Yet," said Standwich, "your abhorrence to it cannot equal mine. Your cause to detest such a tie cannot be so strong; for Margaret is in herself innocent. But think you I could behold my daughter wed with the son of him who was the first cause of all my sin and misery, the man who brought her mother to the stake? No: I love Margaret with all a father's fondness. She neither knows guilt, nor that she is the offspring of guilt. She is like the flower that springs from these rude rocks, but is innocent and beautiful in itself. Yet, such as she is, I would rather hurl her headlong from this rock, and give her delicate limbs as a prey to the wildest bird that ever flapped its wings at the scent of blood, than see her wedded to a living thing that claimed alliance with thee."

"Peace, peace," said Fitz; "it is awful to hear a father speak thus. Poor damsel! I, who renounce for ever the very thought of her being my son's wife, yet even I pity her; she seems of a spirit so gentle, so unfit to contend with the cold scorn of an unfeeling world. And, I fear, she loves my son. I know how dearly he loves her. I had given my consent, and now I must make him wretched. I knew something fatal would happen from the hour of his birth. I learnt that by the stars as I cast his horoscope."

"But I will tell you," said Standwich, "what no star could ever reveal; it is this (and mark me well, for life or death depend upon it), you must devise the means to break this engagement between your son and Margaret. Remember, it must be done without the secret of Margaret's birth being betrayed by you, either to that son or to any living creature. Let me but once suspect you have revealed to John Fitz the truth, and vainly shall you attempt to shelter him from my vengeance. I have means, I have intelligence; I have engines constantly at work of which you little dream. Betray the fatal secret and you shall speedily see your only son a corpse at your feet, and your name for ever extinguished. Promise silence on this theme, and then I leave you, perhaps for ever."

"I do, I will promise it," replied Sir Hugh in great alarm; for these threats from a man so desperate as Standwich had awakened all a father's fears in his heart. "Tell me but this before we part, does Glanville suspect that Margaret is the child of his deceased and guilty daughter?"

"No," said Standwich, "he who bore the name of Margaret's father was my near kinsman, my dearest friend. To save an ancient house from total ruin and disgrace, to guard the helpless child from public scorn, he consented to take her with him to France, and there to bring her up as his own daughter. He died, and left Margaret to the care of Glanville, but without revealing to him or to her the fatal secret."

"It is enough," said Sir Hugh; "had it pleased heaven to have taken that unhappy infant to its bosom at the moment of her birth it would have been a mercy."

"A mercy," replied Standwich, "that was not vouchsafed to me. Farewell, old man," he continued, "Remember the conference of this morning. Remember to obey my injunctions; break this fatal bond between our children—dare not to reveal my secret, and you have nothing to fear—farewell."

Without further parley Standwich hurried from the rock and retreated through the wood with precipitate steps, leaving Sir Hugh Fitz in a state of mind truly pitiable. For some minutes he stood motionless on the spot where he had parted from the outlaw, and then, sighing heavily, he walked forward, untied his horse, mounted, and rode slowly back to Morwel House, pondering in his mind as he went along on the best method to be pursued to break this ill-starred engagement of his son with the innocent but unfortunate Margaret.

CHAPTER XVII.

Pride hath no other glass
To show itself but Pride.

SHAKESPEARE.

SIR HUGH FITZ, on his return to Morwel House, found that the hunters had not yet arrived; a circumstance which afforded him a short interval to compose his thoughts and arrange his ideas, before he should encounter that beloved son whom he felt himself compelled to render unhappy, perhaps for the remainder of his days. And it was some relief to the worthy man, when John Fitz did arrive, that he came not alone, but surrounded by the jovial crew of successful sportsmen, all highly elated with the

cheering exercise they had pursued. The festal board was spread ; and the social meal, enlivened by many a tankard of foaming ale, became one of universal joy.

By the injunctions of Standwich, accompanied with a threat which there was little doubt a character so resolute would not scruple to execute, Sir Hugh was bound to conceal the real cause that existed for his forbidding the proposed union. His situation, therefore, was one of extreme difficulty ; for, do what he would, he felt he must appear to John Fitz as playing a capricious and cruel part.

On one point, however, he speedily determined, and that was to remove his son, as soon as possible, from the fascinating presence of Margaret, and the dangerous threats of Standwich. To do this he resolved to send John Fitz abroad. The time was favourable for his undertaking, as many sons of the English nobility and gentry had volunteered their services in the Low Countries, under General Norris, who there carried on the war in support of the Protestants, in the cause of civil as well as religious liberty.

John Fitz, who had considerable spirit, and longed to distinguish himself in arms, had often solicited his father to allow him to serve, as other young men of his age did, in some of the military undertakings of the time. But the love of an only son, and fears for his safety, had hitherto prevented him from giving his consent. And of late, so much had love enthralled the soul of the son, that he had ceased to importune his parents on the subject ; knowing such a step must remove him, though but for a time, from the side of his beloved Margaret. But now Sir Hugh saw there was no other means effectually to break off this unhappy connection ; and he felt assured should he obtain an appointment for his son, that regard for his character as a man of honour would oblige him to accept it. This appointment, therefore, he resolved to obtain, and to keep his purpose secret till it was executed.

To part from his only son, to place him amidst the perils of war in a foreign land, was indeed a sacrifice. But Sir Hugh saw no other way to avoid what he deemed a greater evil ; and he resolved, cost what it would, the sacrifice should be made. In the meantime, whenever his son ventured to lead the discourse to the subject which was nearest his heart, Sir Hugh either evaded it, or received it so coldly, that John Fitz dared not pursue the theme, lest he should irritate the mind of his

father on a point where he was most anxious to conciliate his feelings. With Lady Fitz the worthy knight had a less difficult part to play, as he resolved to act on her will through the medium of her pride.

One day, therefore, Sir Hugh craved a serious consultation with his wife. In this he told her, as a communication of great confidence, that he had cause to believe their son had formed an affection much below his birth and expectations; for he had set his heart on Margaret, the mysterious ward of Glanville. In order therefore to crush this affection in the bud, he, Sir Hugh, had resolved to send his son abroad for a time, to see some service, like most young men of family, in a foreign land; feeling assured that when Lady Fitz knew such a measure was the only likely means to save John from marrying with a woman of low birth, she would gladly consent to it.

Lady Fitz immediately fell into the snare. She declared her willingness to consent to any measure, rather than see such a death-blow aimed at the honour of her family. It was further agreed, in order to prevent any plotting on the part of the lover, that he should not know how he was to be disposed of till all things were in readiness for his departure. Lady Fitz went even a step beyond her husband in precaution! for recollecting that love will sometimes outlive absence, and possibly, after a campaign or so, John Fitz might return still faithful to Margaret, the provident lady thought nothing so effectual to put an old love out of her son's head as to give him a new one.

Sir Hugh, too prudent directly to contradict her, for the present waived the subject; justly thinking that he was executing tyranny enough in tearing Margaret from his son's affection, after having implied his consent. The good knight hoped that all these difficulties might be overcome by time, the great physician of evils, who sometimes cures, as well as gives, the heart-ache. But knowing that mere words on the part of his wife could do no harm, he suffered Lady Fitz to go on building her castles in the air with perfect complacency.

"Certainly, Sir Hugh," was her remark, "you are quite right in removing John for the present from this unfortunate connexion, I could never consent to my son marrying a woman born without arms."

"Certainly not, my dear Lady Fitz," replied her husband.

"Or, perhaps, if she had any," rejoined his genealogical partner, "they might but quarter our honourable coat with the

bar of bastardy ; a disgrace that never happened to our honourable family but once ; when King Henry the Eighth is said to have added a member to it by a love passage with my grandmother, the beautiful Lady Alicia. But you know, Sir Hugh, an honourable family may tolerate a bar that is given to it by a crowned head, but certainly by no less a person."

"I don't know any such thing, my dear Lady Fitz," said Sir Hugh, "nor do I know that a king's bastard is one iota the more creditable an appendage to an honourable family than that of any other man ; seeing that, in either case, the circumstance is not creditable to our grandmothers, who ought to be chary of their reputation, even if they have no regard to God's laws, for the sake of posterity. For you know, Lady Fitz, that by the law of the land such children have no inheritance ; and an heir male, in the legal sense, is the pride of every ancient house like ours."

"That's the very cause," said Lady Fitz, "why I could wish our John to marry ; since I look to sons not so much for their own sakes as for the name of the family to which they belong, which descends, through them, to the farthest generations. In my estimation, every elder born is as much family property as the mansion-house, or freehold, he is to inherit, and should be equally disposed of, in a manner most advantageous for the estate. Now if John was, as I proposed to you, to marry Lady Howard, he would do well ; nothing could be more honourable, or hold out a greater prospect of happiness. She has had, to my knowledge, three cousins germane members of the Privy Council. An uncle of hers lost his head in the great rebellion in the north, a distinction that only happens amongst great people ; and her own father held his principal estate by doing grand serjeantry to the king, buckling on his spurs whenever his majesty took the field for the first time after his coronation. Lady Howard has land, too, that joins ours ; so that one may say the fields themselves are already united. All these are things that offer great advantages in the married state for our John."

"But perhaps our John, Lady Fitz," said Sir Hugh, "may think there are a few others that ought to be taken into the account ; such as person, disposition, and the qualities of the damsel to whom you would unite him."

"Assuredly," replied Lady Fitz, "Lady Howard is a proper gentlewoman : and then for qualities, she has an ample share of

the tongues. I question if Mistress Roper, the daughter of Sir Thomas More, could have construed better in Latin and Greek. What would a husband desire more? And she has a curious hand at the lute, and the manichord, and can distil sweet waters with any lady in the county."

"And to add to these good gifts," said Sir Hugh, who was willing to humour his wife in her plan, "I have heard she has many virtues; amongst which, certainly, is that of a sharp wit, together with a good name; and this, after all, wife, is the most valuable thing Lady Howard could give to the arms of a husband."

"With a lion rampant, and two wyverns," said Lady Fitz, "what indeed could a husband desire more? Such an honourable tree of alliances that branch out and connect themselves with every honorable line in the kingdom our son will have if he weds with Lady Howard."

"Why surely, woman," cried Sir Hugh, "you would not have him marry the dead as well as the living? No, no, leave ancestors to rest in peace. I will write to my friend, General Norris, and despatch a trusty messenger with the letter, and see what can be done to get an appointment for our son, to remove him from those dangerous enemies to youth—Love, poetry, and idleness."

And so saying, Sir Hugh quitted his helpmate, just as she had reached down, from the second shelf of her own particular cabinet, the family tree, to see how the new alliance would branch in, and branch out, with the noble dead and live stock which that sacred roll of family pride so amply contained.

CHAPTER XVIII.

—When this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence.

SHAKSPEARE.

DURING the interval between Sir Hugh's painful change of purpose, and his communication of it to his son, the time was passed by the young people with less enjoyment than heretofore. Sir Hugh had informed Glanville that the disapprobation of Lady Fitz, and other family circumstances, would, he feared, oblige

him to give over all thoughts of the union; and the news had been broken to Margaret by her guardian, with as much tenderness as the case would admit. This information came upon her with a pang more bitter, since, of late, the lovers had encouraged the hope that Sir Hugh would ultimately consent to their union.

The advice of Glanville, that Margaret should by no means receive the addresses of the young Fitz in direct opposition to the will of his father, and the watchfulness of Sir Hugh, who had of late so beset his son that he could scarcely escape his observation for a moment, had also kept the young people apart from each other; so that, in addition to other anxieties, Margaret had been tormented with those of suspense and uncertainty. Things were in this position when Margaret one evening rambled out to that beautiful spot, near the woods of Kilworthy, called the Pixies' pool.

The sun was fast sinking into the western horizon amid sullen clouds, and as he threw his gloomy lustre around, every green valley and every distant hill changed to a deep purple, whilst the tops of the mountainous heights of Dartmoor seemed to glitter for a moment like the brightest gold, and then to melt away before the evening hour, as fairy visions of fancy fly before the cold realities of human life. As Margaret sat watching the changing scene, and saw the majestic orb of day gradually sink below the clouds, she sighed heavily, and could not help drawing the comparison in her own mind between the moral and the physical world; thinking that her own hopes, like the dying day, would soon sink before the dark clouds of fate by which her path of life seemed surrounded.

She took her seat on the rocks near the pool, that now lay clear and placid, reflecting, as in a black mirror, every object in the sombre hues of the evening hour. She gazed upon its surface, and fell into a train of meditation on her own precarious prospects. As thus she sat with her head reclined upon her arm, dejected, yet calm and lovely in her demeanour, she might have been compared to the melancholy nymph of the Walla (so beautifully described by Browne in his *Pastorals*), before she was transformed into the fountain, whose liquid current is supposed by the poet to receive its waters from her tears. Margaret, however, was not so wholly absorbed in these reflections but that she now and then raised her head to look with an anxious eye to a little path which led through the wood from the town of Tavistock, and her expectations were at length relieved

by observing two persons advancing, one of whom stopped at a spot which commanded an opening in the wood that looked towards Kilworthy; the other came directly forward, with hasty and impatient steps. Margaret pressed her hands together in great agitation, as John Fitz took his seat by her side; for Fitz it was who now gazed upon her with silent affection, as if unable to speak what hung upon his lips. At length, making an effort to recover his self-possession, he said, "Margaret, how fondly, how anxiously have I looked for these moments, though they possibly may be the last I shall ever pass by your side."

The pleasure which Margaret felt from the fluttering hope that stole into her bosom at the presence of her beloved Fitz was speedily put to flight by his last words, and, unable to conceal her disappointment, she said, "Was it to tell me this that you so earnestly importuned me in your letter to meet you here at this hour? I hoped it was to communicate better tidings."

"It is the last act of kindness you may ever shew me, Margaret. To-morrow no obstacle will stand between you and duty, should you deem it such to forget me. My father has banished me not only from your presence but from my native land; and I have a heavy foreboding that tells me this separation will be for ever."

Margaret, deeply affected by his words, wept aloud. She was too simple-hearted to disguise her feelings, and made no effort to hide the bitter pang his words conveyed to her bosom. "And must you go?" she said tenderly; "and must I be friendless as well as fatherless? When God has joined her hearts, why should man part them?"

"No man can sunder mine from you, dearest love," replied Fitz, "unless he sunders the tie that binds me to life. My father has dealt severely, nay treacherously, by me. He has placed me in such a situation that I cannot remain here without the loss of honour, else no earthly consideration should tear me from your side. He has obtained for me an appointment to join the English forces in the Low Countries. My name is already enrolled amongst those who constitute the most noble in the land; judge, therefore, Margaret, whether I could now stay, without becoming a mark for public scorn—without being held as a coward, who dared not draw a sword in a just cause of quarrel."

"But our engagement," said Margaret, "was before this appointment was obtained; and surely to leave me now is cruel,

when you have laboured so earnestly to gain from me that avowal which places my happiness within your power."

"But without honour there could be no happiness for you or me," replied Fitz. "Yet of one thing be assured, that where-soever my destiny shall lead me, if in the ranks of danger, or on the bed of death, my last thoughts will be with Margaret."

"Oh, do not talk thus," she said, "unless you would break my heart with sorrow. Stay; do not leave us. Your father may relent, and we may yet be happy; but to part thus——" Sobs here interrupted her words, whilst tears fast trickled down her cheeks. John Fitz kissed them off, and taking the hand of Margaret between both his own, he said, "I have hurt you. I have spoken too suddenly, too harshly, my purpose; yet, had I felt less, I could have better made it known. My father has of late much changed. He has obtained this appointment without my knowledge or consent; and I own to you, that he has cast out dreadful hints respecting our union, charging me even on pain of incurring a father's curse that I should think of you no more."

"Alas!" said Margaret, "in what have I offended, that he should speak thus harshly? or why did he ever allow of our affection, if it were only now to blight it?"

"It is cruel, most cruel!" cried Fitz; "and what appears to me even yet more extraordinary is, that however severe my father was in words, his manner frequently contradicted them; so that I am assured, whilst he inflicted pain on me, he shared in it himself. Yet nothing I could urge moved him to relent."

"Then we must part indeed!" said Margaret; "I will never be the cause that you should incur a father's curse by disobedience. I may be unhappy, but I will not be unjust. I must learn to bear my hard fate alone; whilst you have a world before you, that will look on and applaud your acts. Glory will be your path, fame your reward. Forget then the vision of our early affection that crossed your path, and may you be happy! I will pray to God to preserve your life; even your father would not forbid me that prayer."

"I part from you," said Fitz, "but I cannot, I will not, consent to lose you for ever. Whilst I have life, I will hope. I will never yield up my right to Margaret's heart and hand. Hear me, Margaret; take this ring," and as he spoke he took one from his own, and drew it upon her finger; "receive it as a parting pledge of my affection, and let what will happen here-

after, should my father exert the utmost rigour in the endeavour to part us, should you be placed in any circumstances of sorrow or distress that this changeful world may bring upon you, and if you need a friend in your affliction, a friend to serve you with life itself, send but that ring to John Fitz, and though death stood between to bid him back, he swears to obey the summons. And do you, Margaret, solemnly promise never to part with that token, whether I am living or dead. Let that be the remembrance of one who loved you more than life itself."

"I promise it," said Margaret, "in the sight of that God in whose presence we both stand; I solemnly promise, that however I may be circumstanced hereafter, unless it be to claim the aid you have so generously offered to me, this ring shall never be drawn from my finger till death has stiffened my hand. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," replied Fitz, "on that point I am satisfied; but, oh Margaret, think what will be my feelings in this absence from you! Think how long, how dearly I have loved you; that, for your sake, I had resigned all those hopes of rising to honour that my father has now thrust upon me. Think, that for your love I am willing to meet his displeasure, nay, even to let his curse fall upon my head, rather than lose you."

Whilst John Fitz was yet speaking, his companion, whom he had left in the wood, came running up, and hastily exclaimed, "Break off your conference; some persons have crossed the wood, and are gone up towards the house. Amongst them I saw Glanville and Lady Howard; you had better part, for if Mistress Margaret is inquired for her absence may cause suspicions."

"You are right, Slanning," said Fitz; "and I am glad you are here, as it is but just Margaret should know how much I owe to my friend;" and turning to her he continued, "Sir Nicholas Slanning is in full possession of my confidence; he knows all my hopes, and it is by his means that I am to gain intelligence from you during this painful absence. Receive him as a brother; it is to his faithful care that I must now commit the dearest thing I hold on earth."

"I fear," said Slanning, whose simple and honest-hearted feelings seemed to glow in every feature as he spoke, "I fear that I am but ill qualified to do the office you would entrust to me. I am, madam, more used to deal with the world as it goes, than with ladies nurtured like yourself, and I mistrust my own

power, when one so gentle as you are is committed to my care. But if a heart that can serve my friend, who has been my companion from the cradle, and a wish to oblige you, with a stout arm for your defence, to say nothing of a head that I hope is not of the worst, if these can, singly or conjointly, render you service, you may command them as the properties of Nicholas Slanning, as entirely as if he were your brother born and bred."

"Thank you, Sir Nicholas," said Margaret; "you speak like a gentleman of honour, and I accept your offer with gratitude; though I trust, except the favour of sometimes hearing, by your means, tidings that concern your friend, I shall have no occasion to task your goodwill with any service."

"You shall command it with pleasure, madam," replied Slanning; "for on my soul," he added with warmth, "I should hold that fellow but a craven if he could see such a lady distressed, and such a friend as John Fitz in an evil case, and not go through fire and water to serve you both. There's my hand, John; and though I am not apt to make fine speeches, like a courtier, yet I can promise fairly and honestly to be true to the charge you have this day laid upon me. And now what more can I do for you?"

"I would ask you," said Fitz, "to bear me company as far as London, whither I must go before I pass on ship-board, and then you shall bear back my last farewell to all that I value on earth. Adieu, Margaret, may heaven be with you; and remember that I leave my happiness in your keeping." Again and again did Fitz linger to say a last word to Margaret; still something was forgot, something left unsaid, till Sir Nicholas Slanning reminded him that it was absolutely necessary to be gone. At length he tore himself away; but often turned his head as he went, to catch the last sight of Margaret, as she ascended the hill on her return to Kilworthy House. The evening, that had nearly now closed in, rendered every object obscure; still, however, it afforded sufficient light for him to distinguish her white veil, as it seemed to float like a snowflake in the landscape; and when, by a sudden turn in the wood, it was lost to his sight, Fitz deeply sighed, as if that and his hopes had disappeared together.

CHAPTER XIX.

Now let imagination form a time.

SHAKESPEARE.


IN the old drama, whenever it became necessary for the development of the plot that some imaginary space of time should elapse between the closing of one act and the opening of another, the chorus stepped forward before the curtain, and filled up the blank, by stating such particulars as were supposed to pass during the interval, and were too many to be exhibited on the stage.

Now, though we are not altogether about to enact the part of chorus, as in the old plays, we nevertheless must so far imitate these venerable models, as to request our readers to consider the close of the last chapter like the close of an act, and to allow us to take advantage of it by dropping the curtain over a certain space of time. Let them imagine, therefore, that nearly two years have elapsed since the occurrence of those events we have lately recorded; at the expiration of which term we again take up the thread of our narrative.

Two years is but a short space of time in human life, yet who that has lived in the world, and has witnessed its busy events, which, like the ebbing and flowing of the tide, never stand still, will feel any amazement to hear that in so short a time things the most unlooked for have taken place? How often, in as short an interval, the fairest schemes which men have toiled to bring to perfection are blighted and overthrown. Our feelings, nay our very motives of action, change; so much are we all the creatures of circumstance.

As we parted from John Fitz at the end of our last chapter, so we will begin this with returning to him. The reader cannot but remember that by the will of his father he had joined the English forces, then in arms against the Prince of Parma, in the Low Countries. There he speedily distinguished himself amongst the bravest of the time; but his father received the melancholy intelligence that his son was slain in an enterprise of great hazard and danger, not many months after he had commenced his career.

We should vainly attempt to paint the grief of poor old Sir Hugh, and of Margaret, on hearing of this event. Indeed,



there was not a heart free from sorrow when the fatal news came to Tavistock, for John Fitz had been universally beloved. But of all persons afflicted by the event, Margaret was most truly an object of pity. Often did she wish that it had been the will of heaven she should have shared the grave of Fitz. She was friendless, and, as she thought, fatherless, without so much as one counsellor, to whom she might unburden the load of care with which she was oppressed. To Glanville she could not complain, since his own wife, his relative Lady Howard, and even his own son, looked upon her as an intruder—an object of jealousy and discontent. Her unhappy situation did not escape the observation of a man so generous as Sir Nicholas Slanning, who endeavoured to soothe it by every kind attention which friendship and humanity could suggest, till, by devoting his thoughts and cares so much to a distressed and beautiful young woman, he became, before he was aware of it, sincerely attached to her, and, in fine, offered her the only means within his power to alleviate her hard condition, and render her at once independent, by making her his wife. Margaret declined his proposal, though she gratefully acknowledged it; and frequently as it was urged upon her, she still declined it, notwithstanding that the warmth and sincerity of his affection was too evident to escape her notice. But there was a difference of feeling, of character, so great between Margaret and Slanning, that had she never been devoted to another, he was by no means a likely person to become the object of her choice.

Sir Hugh Fitz, at the time we resume our narrative, was still living at Fitz-ford, still the wealthy and respected knight, the indulgent landlord, the kind friend, and the sincere member of the Reformed church. In these points he was unchanged, but in other things he was so greatly altered, that scarcely would he have been recognised for that good-natured, whimsical old man once known to his acquaintances, who, whilst they laughed at his follies, did full justice to the sterling worth of his character.

Sir Hugh's grey hairs were now turned to silver, and grew in a few thin locks on either side his head, leaving bare the crown, which, in the words of Chaucer, "shone as any glass"; his countenance had lost all those marks of abstraction by which formerly it was so frequently distinguished. Wrinkles had become furrows; and the light of his eye, already quenched by age, seemed now more dimmed than ever.

His dress, always negligent, had become still more so, and his

favourite pursuits no longer seemed to interest him. Books, even those of astrology, lay around covered with dust; and the spiders had spun their web over many a shelf that contained them, as well as taken possession of his empty crucibles and alchemic pots and pans. In short, to him (as is so beautifully expressed by our great dramatic bard) "life was as tedious as a twice-told tale, vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man."

He spent the most of his time in a slip of garden near his house, where a solitary fountain spouted a stream of water amidst beds of flowers and shrubs cultivated with considerable care. A little arbour overgrown with jessamine, stood facing the fountain, and there old Sir Hugh would sit for hours together, till frequently he was called to the house by the attention of his family, who watched over him with all the tenderness that he merited at their hands.

Amongst those who felt a lively sympathy in the distressing change that had taken place in the poor old Sir Hugh, was Barnabas Ferule the schoolmaster, whose gratitude now showed itself in an unremitting attention to the worthy knight, whenever he could steal away from his daily occupations to give an hour to his patron.

One autumn day found old Sir Hugh seated in the arbour with his hands resting on his staff, and watching with that listless gaze which bespoke a total want of interest in the thing he contemplated the dull clouds, as they lowered in dark masses over the tops of the blackening moor. Whilst he was thus engaged, Barnabas softly stole upon his patron at his usual hour of visiting him.

The poor schoolmaster was in all respects much the same as we left him, except that he was grown something thinner, his gown something more threadbare, and his face much longer. The latter circumstance was probably the effect of the sympathy he felt for Sir Hugh, which gave to his countenance an air so dismal that he might have played the part of mute at a funeral.

Sir Hugh Fitz looked at him as he approached with a "lack-lustre eye," and said in a low and melancholy voice, without changing the attitude in which he sat, "You are welcome, Master Barnabas; the clock has struck ten, and I have been expecting you this half-hour. How came it you tarried so long after your time?"

"Honoured Sir," replied Barnabas, "it is not more than ten minutes since the clock struck."

"It may be so," said Sir Hugh with a sigh; "for the foot of time so lags with me that his minutes are as hours; and yet, Master Barnabas, with the old he should seem to run a rapid pace, seeing how speedily he passes over the course that lies between the old and the way of all the earth. But why should I sorrow that my lot, like all things else, has had its change, knowing that it is God's will? Time will pass on his way, and never linger; joy cannot hold him, and for misery he will not quicken his step."

"Dear Sir Hugh," said Barnabas, "this is a sad mood; can you take no comfort to heart? will nothing cheer you? Come, try and entertain your mind with your old studies. Dame Gid-lay has this morning brought into the world as fine and chopping a boy as ever was born. He came into life just at two of the clock, when there was as beautiful a conjunction of Mars and Venus as ever I looked upon. Let us set up a scheme to oblige the mother, and tell her what may be the fortune of her child; it will be a pleasing diversion to your mind."

"No, no," cried Sir Hugh, as he shook his head mournfully, "nothing, I tell you, will ever more be pleasing to me—I, Master Barnabas," and he stooped down and picked up one of those sear and yellow leaves which the wind had blown into the arbour, "I am but as this withered leaf, that is shrivelled by the autumn air, reft from the stem on which it hung for support—blighted, worthless!" A tear stood in the old man's eyes, and Barnabas, "all unused to the melting mood," was nevertheless so much affected at the sight of his patron's grief as to be obliged to turn aside his head to conceal his own.

"But you promised to bring me the news, Master Barnabas," continued the broken-hearted father, as he made an effort to shake off his feelings, and to speak cheerfully,—“ay, the news. How fares my neighbour Glanville? I have not seen him for many a long month, and to speak truth, there is one member of his family I cannot look upon without the sight of her calling up remembrances so painful that I have forborne to visit Kil-worthy on that account."

"Glanville declines in health," replied the schoolmaster; "and people say he has of late encountered some vexations, that have added those of the mind to his bodily sufferings; for the rest, I hear nothing, except it be that Sir Nicholas Slanning is about to marry his fair ward, Mistress Margaret Champernoun."

Sir Hugh Fitz dropped his staff from his hand, and hastily

exclaimed : " To marry her ! Is it possible ? Does he know ? He cannot. Sir Nicholas Slanning, a man of honour, of ancient descent. This is not true ; it is but the gossip of a country town, which marries every fair maid to the gentleman with whom she was last seen to walk in public. I will never credit it."

" It is spoken of, however, as a matter beyond doubt," answered Barnabas.

" He loved her dearer than life itself ! " said Sir Hugh, in an under voice, as if talking to himself rather than to his companion ; " and his fatal choice led the way to his death. Surely ill fate attends on all who regard her. And Slanning himself told me she had rejected his suit, on the plea that he was not the man she could ever wed, even had she never loved my unhappy son ; and now so soon to change her purpose ! "

" Women are unstable as water, Sir Hugh," said Barnabas ; " for what says the great poet Virgil ? " and with the air of a pedagogue, Barnabas brought out the old verse of "*varium et mutabile*" ; a quotation to be found in the mouth of every scholar when he would abuse womankind from the times of Virgil down to the present generation.

" Yet," said old Sir Hugh, as if recollecting himself, " yet let me judge her kindly. She is young, lovely, and gentle, and should it please God to remove her guardian from this world would be friendless. Sir Nicholas Slanning is a man of worth and honour ; he is devoted to her service. I know it to be so from his own acknowledgment ; and it may be that his worth and honest affection have overcome the indifference with which she lately looked upon him. It is very likely to be so ; since we all know how much a steady course of virtue will overcome prejudice in a generous mind. You know, Master Barnabas, I have often told you that for family reasons, not approving the affection of my beloved son for this maiden, I sent him abroad. He obeyed me, though he loved her better than life itself. Never shall I forget, that on the very day he parted from me, he wrung my hand, as he begged me, with tears in his eyes, that though I had forbidden his marriage, still, if occasion should offer, were he living or dead, I would be kind to Margaret, and serve her if in need. It was his last prayer ; and it shall not be in vain. He is dead ; but I have often thought of it, as if his voice spoke to me from the grave. I have wealth, and no child to inherit it. Sir Nicholas Slanning is a gentleman, but of poor estate, and Margaret is dependent on Glanville. I will see

Slanning; and if a portion bestowed on his wife can add comfort to the married state she shall not want it; and I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that if this poor maiden's first affection was unhappily crossed by me, I may by such an act, at least, have contributed to render her remaining days more easy, more independent."

And, fully bent on this kind intention, the bereaved and disconsolate father quitted the little garden, leaning on the arm of Barnabas, in order to return to the house, and thence despatch a messenger to request an interview with Sir Nicholas Slanning.

CHAPTER XX.

Hermia. O hell! to choose love by another's eye.

Lysander. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,

War, death, or sickness, did lay siege to it.

SHAKESPEARE.

It now becomes necessary that we should turn our attention to the fair but unhappy Margaret, in order to account for that report which, as we have seen, was so confidently repeated by Barnabas to Sir Hugh Fitz. The reader is already apprised of some of those circumstances which rendered her situation peculiarly painful; as, in addition to her deep and sincere sorrow for the loss of John Fitz, she had not the kind consolations of a happy home, or of sympathising friends, to which a mind, overwhelmed by grief, can turn for support and consolation. If she looked to her worthy guardian Glanville, she saw a man sinking under the accumulation of years, ill-health, and domestic troubles. If she turned to Sir Nicholas Slanning, she found his own interests and affections so mingled with his proffers of friendship, that she could scarcely seek the latter without encouraging the former.

The subject of Sir Nicholas Slanning's addresses had of late been repeatedly urged upon her attention by her guardian, who believed that in so doing he acted the kindest as well as the wisest part. Though she dared not openly contradict him, she replied but with her tears. Sometimes she would leave his presence, and then frequently encountered the harsh looks, sharp speeches, and jealous remarks of Dame Glanville, or, what was worse, the cold sarcasm and satirical insinuations of Lady

Howard. Still she was resolute, and the only concession obtained from her was that of receiving the visits of Sir Nicholas with a melancholy civility whenever he chose to make them.

Such was the state of her mind when the return of Standwich (who had been absent, it may be supposed, on some of his dark and dangerous missions) to the neighbourhood of the cave, once more led to her secret interviews with this man, who, it must be remembered, held a powerful sway over her mind. The death of John Fitz, the grief of Margaret, and the proposal of Sir Nicholas, with her disinclination to accept it, were all things soon known to his intriguing and tyrannical spirit.

In the midst of many vicious qualities Standwich yet retained two virtues which, but for his crimes, would have entitled him to respect and pity. One was a contempt for worldly riches, and the other a sincere affection for his unhappy and illegitimate daughter. For her sake, to spare her fame and feelings, he had resolved that she should never know the fatal secret of her birth, and that she should never know himself in any other light than that of a friend deputed to keep a watchful eye over her, and as the spiritual guardian and director of her faith. In these respects he knew his influence was unlimited, and he resolved to use it.

In the course of his wandering life he had held much intercourse with that dangerous body of men the Jesuits; and his apt mind had already imbibed their specious and artful mode of argument, their peculiar manner of acting on the weaknesses and passions of their fellow-creatures; in short, that most dangerous of all qualities, the power of using sophistry as a weapon to subdue and enslave reason. Armed with power so fearful, Standwich now sought an interview with Margaret to enforce her consent to the marriage with Sir Nicholas Slanning: an object that appeared to him the most to be desired for her own good, since Standwich, in addition to his knowledge of Sir Nicholas as a man of worth, believed him to be at heart a sincere member of the church of Rome, though for the present he complied with the outward usages of the Reformed church. Could Standwich effect this match he had yet a deeper view in regard to Slanning, which he hoped to accomplish by the influence of Margaret. This was at present, however, a subject for future speculation. The marriage demanded his present attention. He resolved, therefore, no longer to delay his purpose.

Of the particulars concerning this remarkable interview we can state but a few circumstances. On quitting Standwich Mar-

garet was seen, after her return to Kilworthy, to seek her own chamber. A deadly paleness was on her cheek, her eye wandered in restless agitation, she trembled excessively, and her air and manner betrayed an abstraction so remarkable that, when called down to attend her guardian in the evening, he became alarmed, and kindly inquired into the cause.

For some time she answered but slightly, or evaded his questions, sighed deeply and at length burst into a flood of tears. Glanville, who since the death of Fitz had often witnessed her distress of mind, naturally imputed her present feelings to something connected with her memory of that event, and kindly attempted the task of consolation. He bade her be seated by his side, parted with his hand the hair that drooped over her forehead in great disorder, and, taking her hand within his own, conjured her for God's sake to be comforted.

"Margaret," he said, "tears are due to the dead; their memory is a deposit which the laws of God and man alike hold sacred. Cherish, Margaret, the memory of Fitz, but do not despair. In gentle natures grief will have its course. Your sorrow has had all that indulgence which tenderness could require; but this ceaseless, this wearing sorrow, these never-ending and bitter regrets, are rebellion against God."

Glanville spoke in a manner so deeply feeling, with such an earnestness of expression, as he pressed the hand of Margaret within his own in the agitation of the moment, that she was roused from a sense of her own misery, and, raising her languid eyes, looked in his face. She was shocked at observing the paleness of her guardian's countenance: and, following the kind impulse of her feelings, exclaimed, "My dear and honoured friend, what, alas! have I done to call up these emotions? I know your kindness, I know all you would urge. I will, I will be advised—I came to tell you of this—I——" She rose hastily from her seat, threw herself on her knees before her guardian, and said in a voice deep and tremulous with emotion, "I will yield to your will—I will comply with what has been so fearfully urged upon me."

"What!" exclaimed Glanville in surprise, "How am I to understand this? May I hope that you will accept Sir Nicholas Slanning? Is that, Margaret, the meaning of your words?"

"I must, I must," cried Margaret, in hurried accents; "the sacrifice must, it shall be made."

"The sacrifice!" said Glanville, "it must be made! What

mean you ? This is strange, very strange, so often as I have urged the suit of that honourable man without avail—and now, even before I have named it, that thus you should offer your compliance, and in such words that, though I rejoice to hear your purpose, yet I confess the manner in which it is made known to me appears most extraordinary.”

“It is indeed,” replied Margaret ; “but the conflict is passed—I yield, I consent ; spare me, I beseech you, the rest—spare me all questions.”

Glanville held her hand, it trembled violently. “Rise, dear Margaret,” he said, “I wish you to become the wife of Slanning, yet not in this manner. I did hope that time, youth, the affection of so worthy a gentleman, and your own good sense, would have produced some happy change. I would not now discourage you ; yet, I must say, you speak more like a mourner than a destined bride.”

“I am indeed a mourner,” replied Margaret. “Look at these garments,” she continued, as she cast her eye upon the sable dress in which she was attired ; “I can change them at a word, but not so my feelings. My mind is darker than these robes. I loved John Fitz. He is dead ; in this world lost to me for ever. He can now feel no sorrow, though Margaret should live heart-broken, and linger out her remaining years in misery. It is not of him, therefore, I would now speak. But thus much I owe to truth, which bids me declare, that even had I never known John Fitz—had I never given to him my early affections, Sir Nicholas Slanning would not have been the object of my own free choice. But you have all had the rule over me ; I have consented : and, if such an unhappy being as I am can be worthy his acceptance, let him take the poor hand he has hitherto sought so earnestly to gain.”

“You speak the words of a disordered fancy,” said Glanville ; “you look upon the living with the melancholy feelings that belong to the dead. A brief space of time, change of scene, and, above all, a sense of duty, will, I trust, soon teach a heart generous and good like yours to be just to the man who has so long loved you, even against hope. Think how kind, how frank, how worthy is the nature of Sir Nicholas Slanning. I doubt not he will make you a good husband, and that you will return his love as should a loyal wife to an affectionate lord.”

“I have never been unjust to the merits of Sir Nicholas,” said Margaret. “I know all his worth, and I lament that one

so noble should have placed his affections where they are returned thus coldly."

"These are but maidenly fears," said Glanville, "the fears of a girl who has yet to learn that the principles of a man constitute his worth, and not the varnish of his outward accomplishments; and that one who, like Sir Nicholas, is complete in all the qualities that adorn a gentleman, in honour, in mind, cannot but make a good husband to any woman. Shall I see Slanning, and rejoice his heart with this good news? I will send to him this very night."

"No," said Margaret, "no, not to-night, I beseech you. Give me a few hours to compose my mind. It has been grievously shaken, and I would fain try to meet him as I ought to do. Though my heart is chill, yet I would wish to show that I am not dead to every feeling of gratitude. I owe Sir Nicholas much; much for his faithful devotion to my service, so long as his friend lived; and much for that affection he has offered to me. He has acted generously, and I would fain requite it with my esteem. To-morrow I will meet him in your presence."

"It shall be so," said Glanville. "If I might inquire, yet I would not press the subject on you if it is painful to your feelings, I would ask the cause of a change, so sudden, in your mind."

"I am not changed," replied Margaret, mournfully, "my mind, I fear, can never change."

"But your purpose," said Glanville, "surely that is changed, and has been suddenly expressed to me, and, as I think, your resolution is as suddenly formed."

"I acknowledge it," replied Margaret, "yet I would beseech you to forbear farther inquiry. If my compliance is agreeable to you, there rest satisfied, and do not press me on a point that can avail nothing but to add another wound, where there are already too many that bleed afresh. You have urged me to wed Sir Nicholas Slanning—my consent is given. And now, my dear guardian, my friend, my father—for such I will call you—give me but your blessing, and the blessing, like the prayer of the good, may avail much—it may draw down some comfort on this almost broken heart."

"May heaven be with you, my dearest Margaret!" said Glanville. "May the sorrows of thy mind be hushed to peace, and may every earthly blessing be on thy young and innocent head. To-morrow, then, we meet."

"Ay, to-morrow," answered Margaret; "till then, farewell."

It was a beautiful night, towards the close of autumn. A stillness, like that of death, reigned without, save when it was now and then interrupted by the night breeze that stirred the withered leaves as they lay scattered on the ground where they had fallen.

The air was chill, but the sky clear and blue, and the starry firmament twinkled and glittered in thousands and ten thousands of brilliant lights. But to the eye of Margaret, there was nothing in their aspect that could inspire one cheerful thought; and the rush of the little river that wound along the valley at some distance, and which by day could scarcely be heard, now seemed to her dull ear as if it murmured with a sad and oppressive sound. Every breeze, to her fancy, as it sighed along the thick avenues of the old trees, came like a plaint for the dying or the dead, as if nature bewailed the fall of the year, whilst leaf by leaf dropped around her, even as she bewailed hope after hope withering before her view.

Exhausted by the various emotions she had experienced, Margaret retired to rest. Anxious thoughts, for a time, kept her waking, till, worn out by the very conflict of her feelings, she at last found relief in "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." Yet, long after her senses were locked in slumber, the tears she had so abundantly shed still hung upon her beautiful cheek, like drops of dew on some flower whose drooping petals are closed to rest amidst the gloom and melancholy of the night.

CHAPTER XXI.

What cracker is this same, that deafs our ears
With this abundance of superfluous breath?

SHAKSPEARE.

Nor far distant from that extent of high lands called Roborough Down, by the side of the road leading to Plymouth from Tavistock, there stood at the date of our narrative a little hostelry, known by the name of the Old Magpie, as a painted emblem of that talkative bird intimated to the passing traveller.

The addition of the word old was given to the magpie in

question in the same way as the title of Dowager is appended to a countess or a duchess, to distinguish her from any junior claimant of the same title; a new house of public resort on the Plymouth road having also hung out a magpie, as a decoy-bird for the customers who were wont to frequent the old establishment.

The Old Magpie was a dilapidated edifice, with narrow latticed windows and a picturesque gable, that looked half tumbling down, over which the rose-bush and honeysuckle had hung their branches, as if to hide the breaches which the great conqueror, Time, had made in its once formidable walls. A huge stack of old chimneys, greatly disproportioned to the size of the dwelling, stood in their dusky bulk upright and unshaken, notwithstanding the perpetual war of high winds to which they had been exposed for nearly two hundred years on this elevated station: a circumstance which showed that if the architect who built the house had little taste for proportion, he had a just estimate of stability. A rudely-arched door, under a stone porch hung with ivy, gave entrance to the kitchen; and above the threshold was suspended the proper cognizance of a publican—a bush, which ordinarily denoted that wine was sold within. “Good wine needs no bush,” says the old proverb; but, in the present instance, the bush was the substitute, and not the symbol of wine, either good or bad; for the Old Magpie, much crestfallen and injured in business since the appearance of its younger rival, had so gone to decay that, beyond cider and ale, it could boast no liquor to refresh the traveller.

The house stood in a little garden that was enclosed by a low hedge (as it is here called) of loose stones, put together without mortar or cement; and so contrived that the wind, when it blows strongly, may pass freely through them; a precaution that saves the whole fabric from being thrown down. A few dwarf trees, with round heads like cabbages, grew towards the west (that being the quarter whence the winds on these high lands prevail), and stretched out their branches in an ungainly manner in the opposite direction. The garden could also boast a few straggling elders, some beds of potherbs, and a straw beehive, with a rose-bush or two flourishing amid an abundance of dock-leaves, nettles, and weeds.

It was at the door of this decaying hostelrie that, one evening, a poor traveller presented himself, mounted on a horse, whose lean condition and shabby furniture seemed to declare that his

owner was a person of mean state, or that it was merely a hired hackney. Be this as it may, both man and beast looked fatigued; and as the traveller dismounted, and gave the horse to the charge of a half-ragged boy who acted as ostler, he desired it might be speedily refreshed with a feed of corn, and, having given this command, himself turned to enter the house.

The arrival of any customer, poor or rich, in the decline of business, was now become a matter of some consequence to Grace Morton, a lone widow, and sole proprietor of the Magpie and its dependencies. She now stepped forward therefore beyond the threshold, to welcome the traveller, and presented before his eyes the figure of a neat little old woman, wearing a close mob and pinnars, surmounted by a steeple-crowned hat of black silk, much the worse for wear. Her face was round, and had that look of honesty and good-nature which never belies the heart. There was, too, a touch of care and anxiety about the brow, and she seemed altogether one of whom it might be said that she had suffered this world's evils with a patient spirit. Grace Morton dropped her usual curtsy, accompanied with her usual salutation of a "Good even" to the traveller, "and would he be pleased to step inside?"

The traveller accepted courteously Grace's civility, and followed her into an apartment, in which the neatness of the landlady had attempted to blend something of the decorations of a parlour with the utility of the kitchen. There was a large tunneled fireplace, with its stone front as flat and as broad as a tomb-stone. A peat-fire was smouldering on the hearth, above which hung, by a crane and chains, a large black pot, whose smell was by no means unpromising for the evening repast. The rafters displayed a few pieces of dried bacon, suspended near a pair of boots, not unlike a couple of mortars; and resting within a cross-barred frame-work of oak might be seen an old gun or two, and many an implement of husbandry. The dressers were as white as it was possible for well-scoured boards to be, and exhibited in regular rows a phalanx of pewter plates and wooden platters, with a nosegay set in a broken china jug by way of ornament. The floor was spread with clean sand; and a few prints were seen hanging against the walls. Their subjects were from Holy Writ, and represented the sacrifice of Abraham, the meeting of Ruth and Boaz, and that of Rebecca and the servant at the well; all these goodly personages being clad in the costume of the time of Edward the Sixth.

The traveller, who followed Grace into the kitchen, was a young man, poorly dressed, thin, and even emaciated, in his appearance. His features were regular, and probably had once deserved the name of handsome; but sickness, or poverty, or both conjoined, had given to their contour that hollow and sharp look which affords too clear a display of bone and muscle to be agreeable. His eye was languid, and his cheek ashy white. The hostess hastened to seat him upon the high-backed settle that stood near the ample hearth; and observing the evening was cold, and that he must have had a bleak ride, she threw some billets on the smouldering peat.

As the traveller took his seat upon the settle, he observed an old man with a long beard, who sat, or rather crouched, on a low stool within the space of the chimney; and whilst he seemed to be refreshing himself with sipping, between whiles, a cup of drink that stood by him, he appeared anxious to lay in a store of warmth ere he quitted his comfortable nook. He now would stretch forward the right foot, so as nearly to touch the dogs that supported the fagots, and then he would extend the left in the same manner, and spread the open palms of his hands over the smoking fire, till the wood began to crack and blaze so as to oblige him to draw back.

Whilst thus intent on the comforts of his body, the old man's mind seemed employed in considering the poor traveller who had taken his seat upon the settle, and he eyed him narrowly, whenever the stranger's eyes were elsewhere engaged; for, perhaps from natural modesty, or from a sense of his humble condition, he had shown by a slight tinge of red on his pale cheek that such close observation was embarrassing. The good hostess now asked the guest "What he would please to make use of?"

"Any trifling refreshment," he said; "a manchet of bread and a cup of fair water would be sufficient for him. But he could wish his horse to be taken care of, as he was desirous to prosecute his journey, and the poor animal was much jaded by the badness of the roads."

The old man in the chimney corner, who lost not a word of what passed, and in whose bosom feelings of compassion were strongly excited by the poor and sickly appearance of the traveller, thus unceremoniously addressed him,—“Young man, you should be a stranger to these roads it seems, if you know not that it is somewhat unusual to call only for fair water at a house of public resort. It is the scattering of the guest that maketh

the gathering of the host. But it may be that poverty and not thy will to spend thy penny holds thee to this low diet! I will freely bestow on thee a cup of ale, and something of substance to keep it company. Good woman," continued the old man, as he turned to her, "I see the youth is in need; set before him food, that he may comfort his heart before he passes on, and I will be at the charges of the same."

"I thank you much for this kindness," said the traveller, "and to speak truly, you have rightly judged that my present condition is a poor one; yet it is not so poor but I can make good payment for what I require."

"Nay, then," cried the old man, who doubtless our reader will recognise for Levi the Jew, "it is folly to call for water in a public inn. If thou lackest but water, good youth, there run through these hills numberless silver streams, pure and pleasant as the wells of Sechu, and as refreshing to the thirsty soul as dew upon the parched plains of Syria. To give coin for water is folly, when it may be had for nought. It is like a giving of substance for shadow. If thou hast money, well—spend thy money, quaff a cup of ale; it will do good to the widow, and thou wilt have thy pennyworth for thy penny."

The poor traveller could not repress a smile at the interest displayed by the Jew in the prudent disposal of the stranger's coin. Now whether it was the mild manners, or the delicate health, or the smile, which gave an uncommonly pleasant expression to his countenance, and won the good-will of the hostess as well as that of the Jew, we cannot say; but certain it is she settled the debate by bringing forward part of a cold fowl, and a tankard of foaming ale, which she placed before him, and bid him refresh himself, adding that, poor as she was, they would not quarrel about the payment, if he was in distress. Again the traveller assured her she was mistaken; that recent illness and fatigue had deprived him of all appetite, but that he would endeavour to taste a mouthful, both as an acknowledgment of her kindness and for the benefit of the house.

Whilst he was yet speaking, a loud rapping on the door of the little inn disturbed the inmates of the kitchen, and the cry of "House! house, I say," met their ears. "Alack," said the landlady, as she started up and eagerly ran towards the door, "and who may this be? Well, the Magpie will have a store of guests to night, let what will come of it;" and away went the good hostess to open to the new comer.

The hospitable door revolved upon its hinges, and gave entrance to the stranger, who talked fast and loud all the way into the kitchen, giving especial directions that his horse should be cared for ; and in the following words responded to some civil speech addressed to him by the hostess, which she had managed to slip in between his repeated injunctions concerning his beast. "Company, say you, woman ? Why, so much the better, say I ; a pottle of sack and good fellowship are right welcome to me. But prithee hold thy peace. One magpie is enough for one house. Where be these companions ?" and just then coming into the kitchen as he spoke, the red nose, blood-shot eyes, and square shoulders of the stout pirate, Captain Noseworthy, were immediately recognised by the Jew.

The captain also knew Levi, and lost no time in claiming old acquaintance, "What, Sheva !" he exclaimed, "Ha ! ha ! old Truepenny, art thou there ? as the player says to the ghost under the stage. And whither art thou bound, man ? whither goest thou, to take true goods in exchange for false coin ?"

"Thy tongue is false to say so," cried Levi. "I journey towards the good town of Plymouth on mine own occasions, having certain commodities there to be disposed of ; and as I hear that the Double Rose is returned from her voyage to the New World, I would fain see the captain of her, as I would wish in the next outfit to venture some traffic of mine own"

"What, you traffic to the El Dorado, man !" said Noseworthy, "the very Solomon's temple, as I may say, of the Jews, where all is overlaid with gold—where the bears too are red, and the pole-cat hath furs that might line the kirtle of our queen, and where the very rats have tails like silver, and jewels are as plenty as blackberries ? But wherefore not adventure thine own person, Levi ? Trust me, a commodity of reverence like thyself would go to a good market, should they need a broker for their metals. But talking is dry work. Hostess ! what can your house afford to a seafaring gentleman ?"

"Her house," the hostess said, "could produce nothing better than cider, unless his worship should prefer a cup of spiced ale."

"Cider !" cried Noseworthy ; "I will none of it. It is sour, and should be kept for penitents on Shrove Tuesday. So, warm the ale, hostess, without delay, spice a good brown toast, and let it swim on the top plump and hot, and we will prove the strength of the liquor. Levi, you shall join us ; I hate a solitary toper ;

and this traveller here, who looks by his whey face as if he lacked a cup to warm his heart, and send up some of the blood of it into his cheeks, he too shall have a pull at the pot, and right welcome."

The traveller expressed his thanks, but declined the proffered civility.

"Why, where, in the devil's name did you come from?" said Noseworthy, "that you scorn a cup of brown ale? Mayhap you have a high stomach, used to the Spanish or the Gascoyne vintage. From what part of the world, pray, may you be, young gentleman, if 'tis no offence to ask a civil question?"

"The Low Countries," was the answer.

"Low enough they have been to you, as I take it," said Noseworthy. "You have served, then, may be?"

The traveller answered, "He was indeed from the wars."

"From the wars!" exclaimed the hostess, raising her head as she spoke, whilst engaged in toasting the bread to form the posset of ale for her new guest: "from the wars, say you? Then I will warrant you have heard of a kinsman of mine who followed Master John Fitz. My kinsman's name was Andrew Morton. He was a wild young fellow, and could never be kept to his labour. He went out one day to see the show, when Sir Francis Drake brought the water from Dartmoor to Plymouth. It was a fine sight to be sure, there to see the Mayor and all the Aldermen, all in their red gowns, go out to meet the water, and bid it welcome to their town; and then they all returned with Sir Francis Drake at the head of them, and the stream followed after them into the streets. And then the drums beat, and the flags were flying, and the guns went off, and nothing was talked of but Sir Francis and his exploits, and so my kinsman must needs go after him to the seas, and he left father and mother, and home, and went on board the ship that lay off Plymouth to go the Lord knows where, instead of staying in Devonshire to plough the land."

"To plough the ocean, to be sure," said Noseworthy, "and turn up a furrow round about the globe, as I and Drake have done before him; to see how the sun looks where he never goes to bed, and what sort of candles light the Poles, where night is perpetual."

"La!" said the hostess, staring with wonder, "and what may they be like, if a body may make so free as to ask your worship?"

"Like a woman's love, dame," replied Noseworthy, "that will burn out, though it promises to last for ever."

"It is even but too true a figure," said the Jew, "for I have heard of one woman's love which, I think, is all as waning; very whimsical at least, that will not to-day, and yet will to-morrow."

"I'll wager you a silver tester," said the hostess, "that I know who you mean, Master Levi; for all the country rings with it. Mistress Margaret Champernoun, who would none of Sir Nicholas Slanning, as people say, is now going to wed him, though Master John Fitz's ghost has let her have no peace since the match was concluded."

The traveller raised his head, and was about to speak, when Noseworthy exclaimed, "'Tis all a lie I tell you; country gossip—nothing but a cursed lie, that the old cronies tell over a mess of warm pottage. Slanning is bent on the New World, and sails with Halkit in his next voyage."

The traveller arose. "Is your honour going?" said the hostess.

"Yes," replied the traveller; "let me have my horse—my journey may no longer be delayed."

"Young gentleman," said Noseworthy, "may I ask without offence, for I mean none, which way you are bound, and to what point you steer?"

"Over Roborough Down," was the answer. "Have you ordered my horse to be saddled, good hostess?"

"Yes, truly have I," replied Grace Morton. "I stepped out of the kitchen to do it; but 'tis so jaded that he will scarce carry you a mile without coming down; and I am sorry it is so, for these parts be sadly infected with evil rovers, and nobody, people say, can cross the Down after sunset without danger of being stopped by the outlaws."

"The outlaws!" said the traveller, "that is a new thing in these parts."

"New or old," cried the hostess, "it is but too true. There's not a worse set of thieves in all England than this gang. I can't keep a hen or a chicken for them; and 'tis well, maybe, that I am so poor, or I might have my throat cut every time I go to-bed."

"Better tarry, good youth," said the Jew, "for you are but in a poor plight to meet an enemy. Listen to age; my grey hairs may claim the freedom to counsel as an elder. Be advised

by me, for to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

"Fat of a farthing candle," said Noseworthy; "why, what a chicken-hearted fellow you would make my young man of the wars here. But hark ye, sir traveller, I'll join you, for I am going the same road, and we'll face the devil if he lets us, either in the shape of man or beast."

The traveller paused a moment before he replied. He seemed reluctant to accept the proffered convoy of Captain Noseworthy, but not well knowing how to decline an offer which, however roughly it might be given, appeared kindly intended, he accepted the seamen for his companion over Roborough Down.

The horses were ordered, whilst the valiant captain in some haste finished another tankard of ale, and, drinking a pleasant voyage to himself and his companion, threw down his reckoning, bade a good evening to Levi and the hostess, and, bidding the traveller follow as fast as he could, went to hasten the boy in bringing the horses from the stables.

The Jew watched him out with the eye of a hawk, and as soon as he saw him from the window engaged in talking to Jack Ostler, and clapping his horse upon the neck, he came close up to the traveller, who was about paying the widow for his fare, and said softly, "You are young, and my bosom yearns to you in pity. I know not wherefore it is so, but something tells me, good youth, that evil will betide you if you go forth with yonder cutting swaggerer this night. Tarry where you are; accept the pallet the good widow offers you, and to-morrow the light of the sun may be to you as a light of safety. Go not, for your life, with yonder son of Belial, for, like Saul, he hath an evil spirit, which thou hast no means to lull asleep."

"I thank you, but I cannot tarry, old man," said the traveller. "I cannot abide here another hour; my mind is ill at ease—you know not by what fiend I am urged on."

"But I know with what fiend you go forth," replied Levi. "Falsehood, braggery, a bold hand and a cruel heart, are fiends that walk in flesh and bones."

"Here is a trifle in payment of the fare I have tasted in your house, good hostess," said the traveller; "I am sorry it is not more, but I am poor, and though I cannot accept your kindness I will always remember it gratefully."

"You go then?" said the Jew. "May the God of Abraham be your shield, for my weak aid is vain. Yet stay, but a moment

stay. He is poor, he may need that coin ; give it him back, woman. I will pay his charges. God knows for what purpose he may need even that trifle."

The traveller looked astonished at the vehemence of the Jew. "It is indeed," said he, "the last coin I have about me, and for this act of service I will be beholden to you. I will find the means hereafter to requite you—that is, if I live. Farewell, my companion calls me to hasten. I have no fears. Adieu."

The Jew shook his head mournfully, and followed the stranger with his eyes till he was fairly out of sight.

CHAPTER XXII.

A thousand more mischances than this one,
Have learned me how to brook this patiently.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE younger traveller mounted his horse with an air of doubt and uneasiness upon every line of his countenance. Whatever might be his own motives for pressing on his journey, the warning words of the Jew had made some impression on his mind ; nor would the conversation or the manners of his companion be at all likely to remove the prejudices excited against him. Still there was no help for it, for the traveller was too sensible of his own weakness, reduced as he had lately been by a wasting fever and long confinement, to place any reliance on his own strength and power of resistance.

All things then considered, it seemed to him the safest and the wisest plan to admit the amicable terms held out by the talkative captain, who appeared to be perfectly well acquainted with both the honest hostess and the Jew. It was true Levi had spoken of him in harsh terms, and had thrown out dangerous insinuations ; yet they were but insinuations, unsupported by any ostensible charge. They might arise from prejudice or malice. The vice of suspicion is seldom the vice of youth, and it was not that of our invalid traveller, who, casting aside all fear, gave himself up to other thoughts, of a nature too anxious to be easily dismissed.

In this frame of mind he rode forward at an easy pace, for his horse was not in a condition to admit of fast riding, and the

seaman, who was a true sailor in respect to horsemanship, ambled by his side, now pulling his rein awry, then suddenly twitching it, and anon drawing up and letting loose again his hold, so that the horse, unused to such government, seemed disposed to take the business of the journey into his own direction; and to set off at a gallop. Here the traveller interfered, and, recommending a freer use of the curb, the irritated animal, which had some mettle in him, was at length brought into submission.

"For my part," said Captain Noseworthy, "I would rather steer a ship in the Bristol Channel in a dark night, with the wind blowing up a hurricane, than trust my neck on the back of one of these cursed rickety jades, that won't obey the helm, nor stop when a man has a mind to cast anchor. But did you ever hear such a tale of hobgoblin as the old woman and the Jew told us just now, about outlaws, and the devil knows what?"

"That their accounts were exaggerated I can well believe," said the traveller, "for there is no glass that magnifies like fear; yet I conclude they were not wholly unfounded."

"For the matter of that, why no, worshipful sir," replied the captain; "there are, I believe, in these parts, some stout fellows, who deal with the world after the order of nature; and, finding its laws hostile to them, they are somewhat hostile to its laws: so that when a point of opinion lies between justice and their own wants, they generally settle the matter in the readiest way, and carve for themselves as necessity may require—self-preservation being the first law of nature."

"In short, they are outlaws and thieves to boot," said the traveller. "I wonder our government does not interfere to rid the country of such a nest of rogues, if the magistracy of the county is too weak to deal with them. I think you named but now that you had been much abroad, and that——"

"I have dropped anchor," said Noseworthy, interrupting him, "in all the wide seas of the globe. Why, man, I sailed in Drake's ship the *Dreadnought*, till I became afterwards a trader in the merchant service on my own bottom. I was with the noble-hearted fellow when he met with that mischance near the Antarctic poles, when Drake rapped twice, and loudly too, on the very gates of death, by banging his vessel on a shoal as foul as hell's bottom. Had we knocked the third time, we had surely been answered by the king of hour-glasses and cross-bones in his own person; 'For,' says Drake to me, 'if God,

who holds the wind in his fist, should but open his little finger to let out the smallest blast, we are all lost ;' and so I helped him to form the raft on which we floated, bobbing up and down like corks in a bucket for six hours, till we were picked up off *Nombre de Dios*. There are, I believe, few travellers, on land or sea, who have seen half so much as I have done."

"I nothing doubt it," said the young man, "and that you have seen more than many others, of wits less observing, could possibly find out. I think you named just now a—a Sir Nicholas Slanning, and said that he was going abroad, or something to that effect?"

"I did ; what of him?" replied Noseworthy.

"Oh, nothing," said the traveller, "only that I would be glad to learn any news of a gallant gentleman of whose family I know something."

"Why, yes," answered Noseworthy, "I believe I did say he was, like the rest of them, agog to pick up some of those treasures which may be had for the gathering in the New World."

"And the report of his marriage, then," said the traveller, after a short pause, "is, you think, unfounded?"

"Country gossip, as I said before," replied the Captain. "Why, don't you know that the talk of weddings, and such things, makes up the occupation of every woman, old or young, where there are houses enough standing together to be called a town, with the church in the midst of them? If a man but looks on a maid, forsooth he is ready to sign and seal for her; but if he walks or talks with her, you may call the ringers, for the thing is settled, and he is ready to take her to the church. No, no: Sir Nicholas Slanning, take my word for it, is free, and worth fifty married men yet."

The traveller dropped the conversation, and fell into a train of thought, which for some time Noseworthy, who amused himself with whistling as he jogged on, did not interrupt. They now were gradually ascending the high lands of *Roborough Down*. The surrounding scene was of the most striking character. To the west, where the view was bounded by the Cornish hills, appeared, far distant in the intervening space, meadows, valleys, and gentle slopes clothed with wood. The *Tamar*, whose waters now shone like silver, from the light reflected by a mass of white clouds, wound in a serpentine course at a distance through the valley. To the east arose, above every surrounding height, the bold table summit of *Sheep's Tor*, which now looked

white as marble against the deep ultramarine blue of the sky; an effect produced by the glitter of the setting sun which streamed upon it. The vale of Meavy (whose ancient church, and venerable oak of gigantic circumference, are to this day objects of peculiar interest) opened on the view in all its beauty; whilst its little streamlet, so diminished as to appear like a line of light, strayed, as it were, amidst a fairy world of enchantment.

Looking towards the north, an expansive but elevated plain, beyond Tavistock, bounded the view with the conical eminence of Brent Tor, and its "cloud-capt tower," perched on the very summit, to serve the purpose of a beacon both by sea and land.

They at length came in sight of a rock that stands insulated in the midst of this extensive down. The obscurity of twilight, now fast gathering round, and quickly changing the colour of every object to universal gloom, prevented the hollows and fissures of the rock from being seen; and it looked against the sky, which still retained some faint traces of light, a tall and bulky mass seeming to grow larger as the travellers approached nearer to it.

"There's a rock for you," said Noseworthy. "It looks for all the world like the old black hulk of a carrack that lies aground upon her keel. There are strange stories told about that rock; and, if every gossip's tale were to be credited, these ribs of hard stone may hold a cargo of evil spirits. They say pixies and mischievous imps, that harm travellers, and lead them into danger, lurk thereabouts."

"Idle tales," replied the young man, "to amuse clowns and silly women."

"But there are some men though, and accounted wise ones too, that don't despise them," said Noseworthy. "Now, for instance, there's old Sir Hugh Fitz, of Fitz-ford, a most worthy knight of the rosy cross, who came into this world when foolery was the sign of the ascendant in his horoscope; why he believes in more pixies, imps, and spirits than the devil himself would acknowledge for kindred."

"You have a saucy tongue, fellow," said the traveller, "to throw these scoffs on the name of an honourable gentleman."

"Gramercy!" cried Noseworthy, "we play Hector to-night, do we! and flout a friend for giving his neighbour a just character. Why, man, it touches you, does it—the reputation of the house of Fitz? and the old moon-struck knight must not be named but

in sober sadness. For aught I know, you may be as great a fool as he."

"Keep a civil tongue, insolent varlet," cried the traveller in wrath, "or I will dash it out of your head for you, weak as you may think me."

"The devil you will," replied the captain; "there go two words to that bargain, and the first of them is, if I will let you do it. Men say that old Sir Hugh cast his son's nativity at his birth; I wonder if the stars ever told him the dead would come to life again on this side Roborough Rock."

The traveller started, and looked round full in the face of Noseworthy; who now drew his horse nearer to the side of that of his companion, "Sir traveller," continued the pirate captain, "what will you wager me that I do not raise you a devil, or a host of devils, with as much ease as Sir Hugh could do by his art, out of the hard ribs of yonder granite, with nothing more than the spell of a boatswain's whistle?" and with these words, ere the stranger could reply, Noseworthy held a small silver pipe to his lips, that hung by a ribbon round his neck, and whistled with it, as if he had been calling up his boat's crew.

Ere the astonished traveller, who saw he was betrayed, could attempt escape or defence, he was surrounded by several men, all armed, and of the most savage appearance, who rushed forward from behind the rock. "Villains!" he cried, as one man darted upon him, whilst another made for his horse's bridle; "villains, murderers, I will sell my life dearly." He drew his sword as he spoke, and struck at the man who approached him. His arm was instantly arrested by Noseworthy, who came behind him.

"No blows," said the captain, "no blows, my fine young fellow. We see you are game; but the best cock of the perch can't fight if he is shorn of his spurs—wrench the sword out of his hand." The command was instantly obeyed.

"Wretch!" cried the young man, "Will you stain your hands with my blood?"

"No," said Noseworthy. "If you will but be quiet and hold your tongue; we have too much respect for the ancient gentry of this county to spill the blood of the son and heir of Sir Hugh Fitz of Fitz-ford. You thought I did not know you, and you wanted to be private, did you? Trust me, you shall have privacy to your heart's content; and that no man may intrude upon it, the bowels of the earth will afford you passable security—away with him to the cave."

"What is it you would do with me?" cried the unhappy Fitz, as they were forcibly binding his arms and hands—"If money be your object, though I have now but one coin about me, yet you know my father's wealth. Give me but liberty, and any sum you name shall be your's—I will swear to it by the most sacred of oaths. My father would give all he is worth to save me—but now to bind me, now to enslave me—death were better. Draw thy sword, wretched man. Give me liberty, or give me a grave. Wretch, villain, coward!"

"That's right," said Noseworthy, "blow a hurricane if you will. But one thing I'll tell you, for your own sake: if you ever wish to see day's blessed light again, hold your tongue, or, by heaven, we will have you down below the hatches of my ship, where you shall see no light but that of a farthing rush the rest of your days—so keep the peace if you are not a fool. Bind his eyes, and carry him off," continued Noseworthy, "and if he speaks another word let his jaws be gagged. If he is silent, do him no harm."

The ruffians, who executed all these commands with as little noise as possible, lost not a moment in binding the eyes of their prisoner; his hands and arms were already secured; and, seizing him between two of them, they passed behind the rock, dragged the unhappy John Fitz with violence across the down, and were soon out of sight. One of the men took his horse by the bridle, and, attending Captain Noseworthy, followed after in the same direction.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Don John. How canst thou cross this marriage?
Borachio. Not honestly; but so covertly that no
 Dishonesty shall appear in me.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE reader has seen how John Fitz, hitherto supposed dead, suddenly reappeared, and was as suddenly seized by Noseworthy, who acted in concert with the desperate band so often mentioned in our narrative. In order to account for this seizure, as well as certain circumstances connected with it, we must beg to be allowed to retrograde, and begin this chapter with some mention

of Standwich, and the outlawed miners with whom he had for a long period been so deeply engaged.

These people, who at the date of our story had rendered themselves fearful in Devon, and whose wild acts gave rise to many tales of tradition, besides their illicit traffic in working in secret a vein of silver, which by law belonged to the Crown, and selling the metal at a foreign market, often resorted to robbery as a means of gaining subsistence when want of opportunity for conveying the metal abroad interrupted their usual occupation. It may readily be supposed that persons so dangerous could not long remain in the same haunt without the probability of detection, and of being seized by a superior force under the sanction of justice. To avoid this the outlaws continually shifted their place of abode. Sometimes they sheltered themselves, as we have seen, in the cave of the Virtuous Lady, or in the deep glen of Lidford, where it became difficult, from the precipitous heights by which it was surrounded, the entangled paths, and the thickness of the woods, to come upon them unawares, so as to secure them.

Dartmoor also, which, as we before stated, at this time had no regular roads, afforded an admirable retreat for villany. Wistman's Wood, with its massive rocks, its steep ascent, and its dwarf oaks, set any attempt at attack at defiance. The vast tors, the caves, and numerous hollows, afforded places of security to whosoever chose to take advantage of them. No wonder, therefore, that a half-savage and outlawed people, whose sagacity was sharpened by continual necessity, should thus easily evade all detection, and indeed set at defiance the many attempts that had been made to subdue them.

Those attempts had so repeatedly failed that they were seemingly abandoned, and the gentry when they wished to make a journey over the moor, or in any solitary district, were content to travel in company, or with a body of well-armed followers, as their best mode of security from personal attack. Notwithstanding this, many frightful outrages were from time to time effected. Now and then, though not often, a person was found murdered, probably from having used resistance; and one or two were missing, of whose fate no trace was to be found.

Desperate as these men had become, they were tired of their own condition, with all its attendant hardships, risks, and privations; and would have been glad, by way of trying to better themselves, could they have returned once more to civil life; but

there was no hope of pardon, after such accumulated offences. The only chance left rested on a change in the government ; which, could they assist in effecting, the successful adherents of rebellion might hope to find pardon, and a restoration to their civil rights, from the new powers they helped to raise. It was from this motive they had first listened to Standwich, who knew well that no body of people would act with greater determination than men already desperate in their fortunes, who could lose nothing but might gain everything by the hazard.

Having said thus much, as a necessary preface to the future events of our narrative, we must now draw the attention of the reader to certain circumstances that occurred the night before John Fitz was waylaid and made a prisoner, as they will at once explain whatever may appear extraordinary or mysterious in that affair. Our scene reverts to Kilworthy, where Lady Howard was on that evening, according to her frequent custom, a guest of the family.

Lady Howard sat in mute expectation within the chamber appropriated to her use. She had retired thither at the hour of rest. Her countenance was anxious, and there was a vacancy in her gaze which showed it was no outward object, but rather her own thoughts, that engrossed her attention. As the bell in the old clock-house struck she counted every stroke with the utmost exactness ; and as she concluded the last, she started from her seat, took up a small key, trimmed her lamp carefully, and, gently opening a door behind the arras, prepared to descend a little staircase, which led from the chamber to a sort of postern-gate that opened near the foot of the terrace leading to the gardens. She carefully shaded the lamp, lest it should be extinguished by a sudden rush of air when the door opened, descended step after step with as light a foot as a fairy, and with a firm hand applied the key to the door. It opened, and she looked out. She paused a moment, placed the lamp on the last stair, and, stepping forth, ventured once or twice to clap her hands, yet not so loud as to make much noise.

The signal was instantly answered ; and a figure, which at this hour of the night could only be distinguished as something dark moving forward, sallied from beneath a kind of out-house that stood near, advanced directly towards the door, and entered. Not a word passed. Lady Howard took up the lamp, secured the portal, and motioned to the figure to follow her. When she had regained her chamber, she made fast the door, and

dropping the arras before it, said, "Now we are secure; speak freely, you have nothing to fear."

"What should I fear?" replied the person she addressed; "if aught visits us here, you will have most cause to tremble; and if I meet interruption from without, I carry that with me shall silence it. My watch-dogs have fangs to tear, as well as mouths to bark;" and dropping from her shoulders the cloak in which she was muffled, the short sturdy figure of Betsy Grimald might be seen, armed, as usual, like a man, with pistols at her girdle. Her figure was, altogether, sufficiently formidable to have shaken the nerves of most young ladies, but not those of Lady Howard.

"Sit down, woman," she said to Betsy Grimald; "you have tarried long in the cold. I have secured for you that which shall warm you;" and stepping aside to a little closet she produced a small silver cup, that gave a spicy smell to all the apartment, and placed it on a table before Betsy.

"I have waited for you in agony," continued Lady Howard; "have you gained any certain intelligence?"

"I have," replied Betsy; "and this night something must be determined."

"But surely you are in error!" said Lady Howard. "Perhaps all may be over in time—one day more, and we are safe. The day after the morrow, you know, is fixed for the nuptials."

"And as there is light in heaven," replied Betsy, "ere that day comes, John Fitz will have returned to claim his bride—tomorrow he sets foot on this ground."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Lady Howard; "then all my hopes are lost! Delay his coming, if but for a day, and all I have shall be yours. What angel, or what devil, could thus rise up to thwart our plans? Can you think of nothing? Are you sure John Fritz is free? Has he given intelligence of his being alive, of his escape from prison, of his passage? How comes he? By what means?"

"Will you hear me tell a plain tale?" said Betsy Grimald, "or am I to listen to these questions, and lose the time in words which should be given to deeds?"

"Speak! speak!" cried Lady Howard. "My mind has been in fearful agitation ever since you conveyed to me the intelligence of his being on ship-board. Let me hear all then, and I will try to listen with composure."

"You know well the name of George Standwich?" said Betsy.

"I do," replied the lady. "What of him? He it is who is believed to be the leader of these outlaws that infest the neighbourhood. A price is set upon his head."

"It is," said Betsy. "But you will owe him much for the good service that by his means I can now do for you; though I grant that he thinks not how far he serves another in working out his own will. He knows nothing of my services to you."

"And shall not," said Lady Howard, haughtily. "I have wealth—I am free and independent. Serve me as you have promised, by any means; and I have enough to spare to make the fortunes of twenty such as you are. Will you have more gold now?"

"Not till I have won it by fair service," replied Betsy; "and then I will claim your promise, when all is done."

"I remember it; I will keep it, as there is a God above us," said Lady Howard. "I have promised to furnish you with the means and the opportunity to quit this country for ever—to go where you will be in safety, and end your days as you list. It shall be done. Go on, for the hours wear away. You spoke of George Standwich."

"I did," replied Betsy Grimal. "It was by his means that I learnt the truth. Standwich was with the Duke of Alva when John Fitz was brought in before the Duke, a bleeding, wounded prisoner. Standwich saw him fast locked in fetters of iron, in the cell of a strong castle."

"Cruel man!" said Lady Howard; "could he see a youth so noble, so brave, thus handled! and that too by his worst enemies."

"What!" exclaimed Betsy, "do you lament that he was not freed to wed yonder Margaret? The report of his death," she continued, "soon found its way to England; for he was seen to fall where hundreds were mowed down before the forces of the Duke of Alva. Now it so happened that John Fitz was not a solitary captive, for a servant of his, one Andrew Morton, who became a prisoner whilst flying from the field of action, was also confined near him. Standwich knew this man, and that he could easily be wrought upon; gained him over to his purpose, and on condition that he should serve him, in whatever way might be pointed out to him, procured the fellow his liberty. Fair promises, and fairer rewards, were next given to him, so that, whilst Morton was to pretend that he remained in the town merely to serve his old master who was in prison,

he was in fact a spy upon his actions, under the control of Standwich."

"What could a prisoner do that needed the observation of a spy?" said Lady Howard.

"You shall hear," continued Betsy. "Whilst in prison, John Fitz wrote continually to England, urging his friends to use their interest to get him exchanged for some other prisoner of rank. These letters Andrew Morton undertook to find the means of forwarding. He did so, by betraying them into the hands of Standwich. At length the governor where John Fitz was held captive became less strict in his duty (for the young man had fallen into a fever that nearly deprived him of life), and, taking advantage of this, Fitz contrived his own escape, and, weak as he was, succeeded in it."

"He had at all times a noble spirit, that defied danger," said Lady Howard.

"Andrew Morton," continued Betsy Grimal, "traced his steps, and once more joined his master. He found him still weak in body, and in the same distressed condition in which he had quitted his captivity; but so great was his impatience to reach home that he would not rest a moment to seek relief. He gained the coast, though with much difficulty; when a vessel, friendly to England, brought him once more to these shores. His follower, Andrew, informed Standwich of all these circumstances, and but this day sent him the last letter written by his master, addressed to Sir Nicholas Slanning. Standwich was absent at the hour it came to the cave, and I took it from the bearer, who was one of our own men, a fellow long since connected with Morton. Here is the letter, read it, and satisfy yourself."

Lady Howard's hand trembled violently as she took the letter thus treacherously betrayed into her power. Some last faint ray of better feeling gleamed before her view. She paused ere she broke the seal; but another instant presented to her mind the image of Margaret, her envied rival, and the feeling faded like a transient beam of light that for a moment bursts through the darkness. She hastily tore open the paper, read it, re-read it with deep attention, and dropped her hand upon her knee as she said, "I see not what hopes I have, even should we be able to delay his return to this place. He writes this from Plymouth."

"He does," said Betsy Grimal. "He is still weak and

worn by long confinement in a prison. He has been detained, ever since he put his foot on English ground, by some return of sickness."

"He complains, too, in this letter," said Lady Howard, "of the extreme unkindness of his father, in having taken no means to attempt his release, or afford him any assistance, though he had written so many letters to inform him of his great distress. This he attributes to his father's fears, lest he should renew his suit to Margaret; and, in consequence of this supposed unkindness, he tells Slanning that he will come to his native town to-morrow night, in private. He begs Slanning to meet him by the way, if it is possible, at the little inn near Roborough Down, about sunset; he will then consult with him what is best to be done before he makes his return known to Sir Hugh Fitz, and bids his friend assure Margaret of his ever faithful affection, and that he values life but for her sake."

"Is that all the letter?" said Betsy.

"It is," replied Lady Howard; "I almost despair. Could I have been his deliverer from a prison I might have hoped something from his gratitude; but now, I see I shall gain nothing by delaying his return."

"But I see it and know it too," cried Betsy. "Are you now faint-hearted? do you now draw back? Mark me, lady, and I will show you a way to settle all this matter. In that letter he craves Slanning to meet him by the way near Roborough Down. Some one must meet him," she added, in a significant manner, "but not perhaps the friend he expects."

"But you will not harm him?" said Lady Howard, who instantly guessed her meaning. "If I thought he could but be delayed for a few hours, till Margaret was for ever lost to him—till she was wedded to Slanning—I might consent; but rather than a hair of his head should be harmed I would myself give this letter to the old man, who now sits drooping and sorrowing for the loss of his son; and I would give up my own visionary hopes—for they are but visions—for ever. I would spare the life of John Fitz at any price."

"That he might come home to meet such misery as shall make him deplore that Alva's vengeance had not completed the work of death," said Betsy; "but that is not my business. I have no wish to delay him, though Standwich would risk a thousand lives, did he but see that letter, to prevent the approach of Fitz ere the marriage should be concluded."

"Standwich has not yet seen the letter then," said Lady Howard eagerly.

"No," replied Betsy; "you, lady, broke the seal but now yourself—I wait your command to give it him. For rest assured, when once he knows its purport, John Fitz, to reach this place in safety, must first pass over the body of his enemy. Margaret once married to Slanning, Standwich cares not the next hour to what part of the globe John Fitz bends his course."

"And what interest can this man, this Standwich," said Lady Howard, "have in Margaret, that it should concern him to whom she is given in marriage?"

"That is his own affair," said Betsy Grimald, "not ours. He was a dear friend to Sir Frederick Champernoun, and they were of one faith, that is something. John Fitz is what Standwich calls a heretic."

"Is such a man as Standwich of any faith?" said Lady Howard; "and can he act such villany?"

"Ay, marry can he," cried Betsy; "there are those, fair lady, who can wreak their will on men, however wicked it may be, and think they have piety, forsooth, if they give God thanks for it when all is done."

"You know something more of this strange circumstance," said Lady Howard; "I will know it before I go forward in this matter."

"At your own pleasure, lady," replied Betsy; "but you trap not me to betray my trust. If you did, where would be your own warrant? I could as easily betray you to Standwich as him to you."

"You would not, you dare not do it," exclaimed Lady Howard.

"I will not do it," said Betsy, "and that is enough. You have made it worth my while to be faithful; else, for nothing, I give nothing; my services you have taken at your own price."

For a moment even Lady Howard looked disconcerted by the bold insolence of the woman she employed; and, daring as she was, yet her spirit seemed to shrink before that of the wicked wretch who stood before her; a creature whom, by her own act, she had constituted her accomplice, her confidant, and her guide. After a moment's pause she said, "I have bought your fidelity, and have bought it dearly. I have the means to reward you still farther, if you choose to win them. What is your purpose? What is the aim of all these threats?"

"We must act, at least I must act, to-night," cried Betsy:

with the papers before them. Standwich at length spoke, and assumed that air of command so habitual to him, which shewed he felt his own superiority, and would equally impress the consciousness of it upon those around him. He was a bad man, but nature had formed him with powers to rank him leader in whatever he undertook.

"This night," said Standwich, "we must act. Captain Noseworthy will depart by the first dawn of light to see all prepared for the purpose we have spoken of before. The vigilance of our spies, the activity of our agents, and the fidelity of you all, have placed things in a train for action; we now wait but the return of Ballard from France; then we rise to a man. The northern confederates are prepared; the faction in London is ready; and we in the West watch but the happy moment to place the noble captive Queen upon the throne."

"Have you any assurance, Captain Standwich," said Cuthbert Mayne, "when Sir Thomas Morley will attempt to surprise the governor, and to capture the town and castle of Exeter?"

"I have," replied the leader: "the moment Sir Henry Lyne can bring up his men from Cornwall, he will march forward."

"Are we strong enough, think you?" inquired Cuthbert. "What if we should fail?"

"We can only do so by mistrusting our own powers," answered Standwich. "We are strong on all sides. Sir Francis Englefield holds a sure correspondence with the Queen of Scots. He is even now at the court of Spain, obtaining money and supplies, and hastening every means of co-operation. Ballard is in France, with Mendoza and Lord Paget. The Queen's veteran troops and gallant leaders are absent in Flanders. Another rising in the North is on foot: in Ireland they are ripe for rebellion. We in the West work surely, though secretly: we could rise at a moment's notice; we are on fire for action:—and then in London——"

"In London," said Cuthbert, "we have planted our very citadel;" and his eye flashed with enthusiasm as he spoke: "Yes, I envy those gallant spirits, those six devoted adventurers whose names will hereafter be written in characters of light—Babington, Savage, and their fellows; they have bound themselves by an oath never to quit their holy purpose till they have planted a dagger in the heart of Elizabeth; did but occasion serve, how gladly would I enrol my name with theirs to raise it to a height so glorious."

"To raise you to a height so dangling, you mean, Master

Cuthbert," said Noseworthy. "Why what the devil do you and all those madmen think to get by this wild scheme, but a long rope, and a short road to it? Your glories aspire to a Tyburn tippet, and that will be the end of them. What! do you think that Queen Elizabeth is fool enough to sit still and let you, or a dozen such as you, come and cut her throat? Why, look ye, when Thomas Appletree shot at her barge, and wounded one of her men, as she rowed down the Thames, didn't she swear a good round oath that she would take the fellow alive with her own royal hands, and bade her bargemen row her hard after the offender? She has a spice of the devil in her, let me tell you; and I like the old wench the better for it. And, after all, to murder a woman in cold blood is a cursed cowardly trick."

"To hear you run on at this rate," said Cuthbert, "a man would fancy you had no concern in these matters; and yet it is by your means that we hold intercourse with our friends across the seas."

"Ay, ay," cried the Captain; "that's a different thing. There I am on my proper element, and I can play up a better game on the seas than you will ever do on the shore—for you are a shallow pilot. This cup of sack is enough to drown all your counsels."

"You jest, Captain," said Cuthbert; "your Swallow is our best messenger, and such an honest fellow as you are will never desert our cause."

"Oh yes," cried Noseworthy, mimicking the shrill pipe of Cuthbert; "I am an honest fellow just now, when you want me, am I? But what sort of a fellow did you and Standwich make of me last night when you persuaded me to go out and to kidnap for you a sickly boy, who, as far as I can see, is fit for nothing but to be hanged? And for what purpose he was to be thus waylaid, and hoodwinked and handcuffed, and now laid in irons, I should be glad to know."

"When it concerns you to know it, Captain Noseworthy," said Standwich, haughtily, as he raised his head from the papers he was overlooking, "you shall know it, but not till then. You have had your recompense for what you did; and at present the business is none of yours."

"But the business is mine," said Noseworthy; "this is no common snatch, no hind's son or beggar's brat kidnapped out of the way, who is so poor that nobody thinks it worth while to see if the devil has got him or not. This youngster is the son of

a knight, and a powerful one into the bargain, and there will be hue-and-cry, and all the posse of the county out after the thief by-and-bye. And remember, Captain Standwich, that though I cross the water with your papers, and your people, and such like, I do nothing on dry land in the way of rebellion for you—I don't fire a gun for you in your intended brawl. I would have my neck safe and my limbs free in this country, which can never be if I am known for the kidnapper of John Fitz. I would not have laid a finger on him had I supposed you ever intended to set him free again after a few days' confinement, which I heard you tell Cuthbert you meant to do this morning."

"I have told you before, Captain Noseworthy," said Standwich, "that for especial reasons, which do not concern you, I was desirous to keep this young man a close prisoner for a certain space of time. I have no personal enmity against him, more than, perhaps, as he is a son of one of my greatest enemies. I design him no injury in life or limb, and to-morrow morning he will be set at liberty."

"Then to-morrow morning the first use he makes of that liberty," said Noseworthy, "will, very naturally, be to go to the sheriff of the county, give a particular description of my person, an account of all the affair on Roborough Down, the posse is let loose on me, and I can never show my head again in safety in these parts, unless indeed your crazy plots succeed—you have trapped me into this danger, whilst you steer clear of it; for, ever since the young man was brought a prisoner to the cave you have taken special care he should never once see your face, to know or even to guess who detains him—I shall have the credit of the whole affair, and all the danger."

"Your danger is but small," said Standwich, "knowing how much you are at sea, how seldom you have of late touched on this coast, and that when the day is once our own you will have nothing to fear."

"But that day, like the last day," replied the Captain, "is a confounded long way off; and what is more, I will not trust to it, nor will I be cheated out of the freedom of landing on this coast, when it likes me to do so, without fear. Hear me, for I am determined, I will give you the choice of two things."

"Of what two things?" cried Standwich. "Do you, whom I employ, presume to dictate to my judgment, or to my conduct in this matter?"

"No," said Noseworthy, "you may turn your judgment if you will into a shallop, and see how long she will float under conduct of your piloting plots. Do you really want me to trip over the water, as agreed, with those sealed packets to Don Philip?"

"You know I do," answered Standwich. "There must be no delay."

"Then I'll be hanged if I go," said Noseworthy, "without the younker goes on board with me. Let me ship him safe under hatches, and I will swear to you, by the holy tears of the Virgin at Loretto, not to harm a hair of his head. But once let me get him to Spain, and I warrant me I will so dispose of him that John Fitz comes home to tell no tales as to who shipped him off. Now, that's my way of kidnapping; take your own, if you like it better; but if you do, the Swallow hoists sail to-morrow morning, Captain Noseworthy goes on board; the sea has wide paths for him, but never more does he tread those of your crooked policy, to oblige you or the Scotch Queen."

"You will not go then with the packets to Don Philip without I consent to this young man's going with you?" said Standwich.

"I will not," cried Noseworthy, "I will not budge for you; I would not throw out a rope's end to save you all from drowning. Now you know my mind; so be quick to make up yours."

Standwich seemed disturbed. He threw himself into a chair, and for some minutes appeared to be lost in thought. At length he started up, and hastily exclaimed, "He shall go with you; yes, I see it all, in every way it will be the best plan. You will not lay hands upon his life?"

"Not without he is mutinous," said the Captain; "I purpose to take the first opportunity to ship him off with some Spanish fellows that I know of, who will undertake to carry him to some part of the New World, where, if he likes it, he may plant a colony, and set up for king of the people himself."

"And if I consent to your plan, to give up the prisoner to your charge, you will set sail immediately to cross the seas as the bearer of those papers to Spain?"

"I will reach the vessel, and weigh anchor by to-morrow night," replied Noseworthy; "the wind is in the right quarter, I will bear all the packets, and do all you require."

"It is agreed then," said Standwich; "the prisoner is yours. But there is one duty you must perform, and that for your own safety."

"What is it?" inquired Noseworthy; "no more kidnapping, I trust. I've had enough of that business; and you will not so easily impose on me again, I promise you. I little thought when I set sail for Roborough Down, on the top of such a jibbing crazy thing as a horse's back, to secure this boy for you, that it was to be my part also to put him out of the way for my own security. You ran a-head of me there, but it shall be the last time you do so."

"Well, never prate about it," said Standwich, "we shall soon have the means to reward you amply."

"Your means, if they depend on your plots," said Noseworthy, "I take it are no better than Frobisher's mines. What is it I must do to-night?"

"Mount watch over the boy, John Fitz, that he does not escape you. I must depart on matters of deep moment. Sir Thomas Morley meets Cuthbert; and I must seek an ally, without whose aid our best plans may fail. We will return before daylight, and relieve your watch."

"Lend me your pistols," said Noseworthy, "for the lock of one of mine is broke, and the other is foul."

"There they hang against the rock; take them down," answered Standwich, "they are loaded with ball; I have a smaller pair that will do for me."

"And where must I watch?" inquired Noseworthy: "where have you stowed the younker?"

"In the last recess of the cave," said Standwich. "It joins the great cavern; it is secured by a door barred without."

"Then I will watch in the great cavern," replied Noseworthy; "and if he attempts to break prison, and to pass me, he shall have a bullet through his body, by way of teaching him subordination. I allow no mutiny where I command. Give me drink, and I will go to my post. Is there fire kindled in the great cavern? For this cursed rock of yours is as cold and as damp as the hold of a leaky vessel."

"There is no fire there," answered Standwich.

"Then fill up the flagon," cried Noseworthy, "for if we have no fire without, there is the greater reason to keep warmth within—send in the liquor, and give me a lamp; I will to my post. You set out at once?"

"Instantly," said Standwich. "I will return by break of day. Good night."

Captain Noseworthy departed, being supplied with all things

necessary as he desired. The others were already gone with Cuthbert: Standwich remained behind. No sooner did he find himself alone, than passing through a narrow passage cut within the rock that communicated with a recess in it, for there were many, like separate chambers, in this subterranean habitation, he called on the name of Betsy Grimal. She obeyed the summons, followed Standwich, and returned with him to the outer or first chamber of the rock, where he had been engaged with his companions.

"How fares your prisoner?" said the outlaw: "Has he taken rest or food?"

"For some time," replied Betsy, "he refused all food; and finding it in vain to question me he gave himself up to despair. I heard his groans in my cell, when I had made fast the strong oak door; but nature conquered, in spite of his despair. Worn out, as I take it, by fatigue, misery, and weakness, he at length slept, ay, and slept soundly too, for many hours. He awoke, I conclude, in a less desperate state of mind; since, when I again offered him food and wine, he said he would take both, if I would first take the assay before him, that he might know they were not poisoned; I did so, and gave him to drink. 'I take this,' said he, as he raised the cup to his lips, 'not that I wish to lengthen my unhappy life, but that I will not become my own destroyer by famine. My trust is in God's mercy; for all human aid seems vain.'"

"Do not repeat it," said Standwich, "you almost drive me from my purpose. I pity the boy, for, saving his ill-placed love for my daughter, he has in nothing offended me. But his father——"

"Ay, his father has indeed been your enemy," said Betsy; "but you still hold your purpose to give John Fitz liberty to-morrow, when his return cannot injure you nor yours."

"No," said Standwich, "I dare not do it; the pirate refuses to do my errand to Spain unless I consent that John Fitz goes with him as a prisoner. He thinks that his discovery, probably his detention, must be the consequence if I now give liberty to the youth he has so misused. More than life and death depend on our supplies from Spain, as we are poor, and cannot act without them; and there is no vessel at my command but the one belonging to this fellow. I must have his services, cost what it will; for though a churl, he has been faithful to me. I have therefore consented, for the pirate's security, to give up to him John Fitz as a captive. He takes him away."

Betsy Grimal, knowing that this plan would not fall in with the wishes of Lady Howard, and that her own large reward was conditional on the safety and liberty of John Fitz, now warmly opposed the purpose that he should be thus kidnapped to Spain by a base fellow like Noseworthy. Standwich looked surprised by her vehemence. "I thought," said he, "that your breast was incapable of pity. Why is this change? You once held the whole family, nay, the very name of Fitz, in utter detestation, and went even beyond me in your desire for revenge."

"It is the father, not the youth," said Betsy, "who was my enemy as well as yours. The stripling has injured neither of us."

"But he has injured me, even in the dearest point," replied Standwich; "he won the affection of that child, who, dear to me as she is, I dare not call mine; for her sake I would now keep him for ever from her sight. She thinks John Fitz dead, and weds Slanning. I conquered her spirit, her will bowed down to mine, and before we parted I drew from her a solemn oath that she would wed Slanning. Think then what would be her agony of soul now to find Fitz alive! No, I will spare her that pang; to her he shall be dead still. He must remain a prisoner, he must be for ever banished; I could not thus torture the feelings of my child. She may be happy while she thinks him in the grave. Not another word—do not plead for him; my purpose is not to be shaken—it is incapable of change."

So saying, Standwich threw on his cloak, dismissed Betsy Grimal, and soon after sallied forth.

CHAPTER XXV.

He that stands upon a slippery place,
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE unhappy young man who was thus cruelly to be sacrificed to the wicked purposes of his enemies lay within the cave allotted to him as his prison, his feet secured with cords, and with no bed but some straw scattered on the ground. The agony

of his mind was beyond all power of description. The men who had thus secured and imprisoned him had never made the least attempt to search his clothes, or to demand money from him. It was evident, therefore, robbery could not be their purpose; but that the sole motive of such violence was to detain and secure his person.

For what cause? was a question that naturally presented itself to his mind; and, as he was a total stranger to the men who had arrested him, it appeared probable they were not acting on their own account. Who was their employer? The thought awoke a train of suspicion in his mind more acutely painful than all the injuries and miseries he had suffered whilst languishing in foreign captivity, and enduring the accumulated sorrows of sickness and want. The report of Slanning's intended marriage with Margaret, which had casually dropped from the lips of the poor woman at the inn, now recurred to his mind with horrible forebodings. And when he put all things together, a succession of the most dreadful suspicions followed. Had Slanning betrayed him, in order to rival him in the love of Margaret, and to gain her hand?

When the mind, acting under a powerful impression, once admits a dreadful suspicion as possible, it is surprising what a tormentor imagination quickly becomes to the susceptible soul. It raises phantoms of the most fearful forms, converts shadows into substances, and receives every wandering thought that supports its fabric of fancy with an avidity almost incredible to a dispassionate and calm observer. It is like a disease which changes nutriment into poison, to destroy the very frame it was designed to nourish.

In this state of mind was John Fitz. He now remembered how entirely he had trusted Slanning with the secret of his love for Margaret; how often he had cautioned him not to betray the continuance of it to his father; he recollected also, with undefined suspicion, how repeatedly he had written to that once fond father during his long imprisonment, and that no means had been taken by him, either to relieve the distress of his only son, or to use his influence, that by the interference of the British powers his liberty might be procured through an exchange of prisoners. What could be the cause of conduct so unrelenting on the part of his father, who had always tenderly loved him? It must be, he thought, that the love of the unhappy son had been betrayed by Slanning to his offended parent, who, rather

than see him wedded to Margaret, suffered him to linger out his days in a foreign prison.

And then came the most evident proof, as John Fitz fancied, of Slanning's guilt. He had written to him the moment he arrived in England, to tell his friend of his deep distress, his continued affection, his purpose to return in private, and above all, to request that Slanning would meet him, if possible, at or near the little inn on Roborough Down. And what followed? He was waylaid at the very house he had appointed for the meeting; he was made a prisoner on the down, conveyed away, and his person secured. By whose command could this have been done, and for what purpose? Who but Slanning could have known it was his intention to pass over the Down, and on that fatal evening? The evidence was clear, clear as day. The whole country talked, so the poor hostess had said, of the intended marriage of Margaret and Slanning. Fitz, therefore, John Fitz to whom she was betrothed, and whom Slanning had thus basely betrayed, must not be allowed to step in at such a moment to blast the hopes of the traitor, and to expose his infamy to all the world. No, he must be secured, he must be made a prisoner, to silence his claim upon the false, perhaps the deceived, Margaret.

Such was the substance of the maddening train of suspicion that arose to distract John Fitz during the dreadful hours of his confinement in the cave. Sometimes he thought that he was reserved for death, to complete, by his murder, the supposed horrid train of villany on the part of Slanning; at other moments he fancied he might be imprisoned but for a time: and in such moments his soul breathed the bitterest vows to satisfy to the full his vengeance—at others, the image of Margaret, beautiful and tender as he had parted from her, presented itself to his view, and he was melted into the deepest sorrow for her loss. He had heard, whilst in prison abroad, that a report of his death had been circulated in the English army; but his repeated letters to his father and to Slanning, all of which, he was assured, had been conveyed to his own country by the hands of a most respectable merchant, must, he thought, have contradicted that report. Indeed, Andrew Morton had often assured him that even General Norris knew he was alive, and had himself contradicted the report of his death. No doubt therefore could exist that the General would lose no time in informing his friend Sir Hugh of the fact.

John Fitz was in this state of distraction, his limbs extended on straw, and lying with his face covered by his hands, upon the earth, when, about midnight, he heard the bolts of his prison door softly unbarred, and a figure entered, who shaded a lamp she held in her hand with the skirt of her cloak. He raised his head from the ground, and, rendered almost frantic by his sufferings, hastily exclaimed, in a tone of voice which expressed the irritation of his mind, "You are come to finish your work—I am ready, murder me, and give me peace." The figure raised her hand, clenched it, and motioned silence, in a manner so emphatic that John Fitz was startled, and gazed on her in fixed attention, as she softly closed the door, and, dropping her cloak, held up the lamp as she stepped forward to where the captive lay on the ground, showing by the gleam of light that cast a red and unearthly hue upon her features the stern and masculine countenance of Betsy Grimal. For a moment she stood quite still, scarcely drawing breath, as she listened attentively to be assured, ere she ventured to speak, that all was safe without. She then bent her head over the couch of her prisoner, and said in a low, but distinct voice, "Make no noise, life and liberty depend on this hour. To-morrow all hope for you is for ever passed."

"What mean you, woman?" said Fitz. "You are my keeper, I am your captive; do you come to mock my misery?"

"No," replied Betsy, and, unsheathing a large knife which, together with her pistols, was constantly worn in her belt, she stooped down, and said, as she cut the cords that confined the feet of the prisoner, "This is the purpose for which I come, to give you liberty, if you have a hand and a heart resolute enough to adventure to gain it—but fear nothing, I will protect you."

"You protect me?" replied John Fitz, "you are a woman."

"And an armed woman," cried Betsy, "and a bold one, as you may find before we part. Rise up, and follow me—but you cannot, your limbs are stiffened, they have lost the power of action from these bonds;" and kneeling down she chafed his limbs with her hands, till he had at length so far recovered as to be able to stand.

"For what purpose," inquired John Fitz, "am I thus freed? Is it for good or evil? If for good, why have I been thus misused, imprisoned, and betrayed? I can meet death, I trust, as a man should meet it, when death is inevitable; there needs no new device to destroy me elsewhere."

"Mistrustful boy!" exclaimed Betsy, as she assumed her sternest look, "keep silence, or die as a fool who runs to meet his fate; or if you will speak whisper as low as I do."

"I would know the worst," answered Fitz, "I would learn at once my fate."

"Cease thy folly," said Betsy. "If my purposes were evil, I had accomplished them on the instant; ay, before I cut those cords that held thee down to the ground. This solid rock, in which you have found your prison, would never betray my counsels, or my deeds. Once more I ask you, dare you follow me to liberty?"

"In this place," said John Fitz, "I hold my life as already forfeited. I will follow; I have no arms; the ruffians who seized me deprived me of all means of defence."

"Take my knife," said Betsy, "that will suffice for the present. In the outer cave I will find a better weapon for you. I cannot part from my guard," she added, as she laid her hand upon the pistol at her girdle. "We have not a moment to lose. Can you stand firmly now? Are you yet strong enough to be certain of your footing?"

"I am strong enough," said Fitz, "to adventure on liberty, though I still feel numbed from the long confinement of these bonds—go on then. If you are sincere in your desire to give me freedom, I will forget that you have ever been my keeper, and hereafter you shall find me grateful."

"I want no gratitude of yours," replied Betsy, "are you ready?"

"Yes," said Fitz, "what must I do?"

"First hear your danger," she replied; "for peril you must encounter, before the heavens above once more lie before your view. Beyond this cavern you may find safety; within it, you are a mark for destruction."

"You torture me with this suspense," exclaimed Fitz; "speak freely."

"You have spirit," said Betsy, "and I like that in you. Here lies your danger. To-morrow you will be carried a prisoner on board the vessel of a pirate. Look upon your enemy, but be silent as you value life;" and stepping softly forward she opened the oak door of the cave where Fritz was confined, to its utmost extent, and he now saw, by the light of a lamp that hung from the excavated roof of the great cavern, reposing on a rude couch, the sturdy and robust form of the brutal pirate. He was fast

locked in sleep. His hand, however, even in sleep, was placed on his pistol that he had by his side. As John Fitz looked on his ruffianly oppressor, his blood boiled with indignation, and he could scarcely keep his feelings within the prescribed bounds of caution.

"There lies drink and brutality," said Betsy Grimal. "He sleeps sound, however, for I drugged his night-draught. If he wakes before you pass without the cave, you are a dead man."

"And worse than dead—a slave—if I remain in it!" said Fitz; "lead on, I am ready."

Betsy Grimal now walked, or rather glided forward, and taking her stand before the pirate as he slept, she drew forth her pistol, and held it pointed at his head, as she said to John Fitz, "Pass on; if he wakes, I will save you all interruption."

The cold and deliberate tone in which this woman thus expressed her purpose to deprive of life a fellow-creature who, however bad he might be, was still her associate, made Fitz shudder, and the thought crossed his mind that he probably owed the assistance he received from such a woman to some dark motive of wickedness. But he was still within the cave of danger and iniquity, he obeyed her therefore in silence, anxious to be rid both of a foe so certain and a friend so doubtful.

In the mean time, the pirate's sleep continued, to all appearance as sound as the last sleep of mortality; and Betsy Grimal, having seen Fitz safely pass the great cavern, followed, and guided him through the labyrinth of passages that succeeded, and at length without its confines. When she had reached the last door, she extinguished the lamp. On coming to the open air, though morning had now begun to dawn, yet such a heavy mist hung around that no object could be distinctly seen, nor could Fitz in the least conjecture where he was.

Betsy still led the way, guiding him by a steep and narrow path up the side of the hill, at whose foot the entrance to the cave of the Virtuous Lady lay concealed. Again she descended, and now guided him to steeping-stones across the river, which they passed in safety. For some time she was silent; and her companion deemed it better, as she had thus far served him, to let her finish the work in her own way. After walking for some distance up a steep acclivity on the side of the river opposite to the cave, they at length gained the summit, and Betsy stopped on an open heath or common.

"Here," she said, "we part ; I give you the sword that I took for you before we left the cave. Take this path, it will soon bring you into a road you will remember, for it leads to your native town. Say nothing," she continued, as Fitz was about to speak, "I neither want thanks nor guerdon from you—you can give me none, for thanks I do not value, and have not deserved. I have not saved you for your own sake ; and for gifts, you now have nothing to bestow. After this hour I trust we may never meet more ; yet I have done you good service ; for, as true as that there is a heaven above us, but for my help, after this night you would never more have seen the blessed sun on English ground. I have therefore a claim on you."

"Speak it," said Fitz, "I am not ungrateful. By God's providence you have this night been the instrument of my preservation. What would you have me do ?"

"Never betray the entrance to yonder cavern, should it live in your memory," said Betsy Grimal ; "if you do, it may cost me that life which I have risked to save yours. Will you swear never to betray it ?"

"So help me, heaven !" exclaimed John Fitz, "were my own life or death depending on it, I could not trace again my way back to yonder cave. You need not fear that I should betray you ; and if I had the power I hope I have not the will to destroy my preserver. Are you satisfied ?"

"I am satisfied," replied Betsy, "since your word may be as good as your oath, for aught I know ; both may be easily broken."

"Not by me," said Fitz ; "I am of an ancient house, whose honour is unsullied. And now let me ask something of you, that I trust you will not refuse to answer me. By whose order, I would pray you to tell me, was I thus basely betrayed and confined ?"

"Nay," exclaimed Betsy, "be content with the liberty that lies before you, and inquire no farther. Ask no questions that may bring danger with their answer. I serve those whose lives are worth twenty such as that of a stripling like yourself. Go your way, keep your promise, and ask me nothing. Here we part ; you have life by my means, and I look that you do not betray me."

"Miserable woman," said Fitz, "I see it all. You are banded with outlaws, and yonder brutal fellow is of their number. Listen to me. I would, in despite of yourself, repay you in some sort

the good deed you have done me. My father has wealth and power ; quit these people, follow me, and the service you have done me shall be rewarded by pardon for the past, and by furnishing you with the means to lead an honest life of sober industry in time to come."

Betsy smiled contemptuously at the proposal. "What!" she cried, "to sit all day in the sun, turning a wheel, or knitting hose, to gain a miserable dole of bread for my support. I know you, but you know not me; I am a woman, it is true, but I have lived for more than eighteen years as men live whose means are desperate. Your offers are vain, even would I accept them; for know that I could not be pardoned. The laws have already passed their sentence on me, but I have braved them, and I will do so still. Nay, do not shrink and look at me as if a viper crossed your path. Had I been other than I am where had you been by this morning's light? Farewell; pass on your way."

She turned from him, and left John Fitz equally astonished at her bold and daring spirit, at the services she had rendered him, and at the hardened, vicious character of her mind—a mind which he saw at once, however it might now be degraded by her way of living, and her associates, had in early life received a degree of culture far beyond the common class. Thus doubting and wondering, weak and feeble as he was from the late events, as well as from previous sickness, John Fitz commenced the long and weary way that still lay between him and his native town. It will be our task to trace him through it in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Thou common friend, that's without faith or love
 (For such is a friend now) : treacherous man !
 Thou hast beguiled my hopes ; nought but mine eye
 Could have persuaded me : Now I dare not say
 I have one friend alive ; thou would'st disprove me
 Who should be trusted now, when one's right hand
 Is perjured to the bosom.

SHAKSPEARE.

FROM his extreme weakness the unhappy heir of Fitz was frequently obliged to pause, and to sit down on the wayside, as he journeyed on ; and many hours elapsed before he came in sight

of a spot which he had so long hoped, yet now dreaded, to reach. At length a turn in the road, which ran along the side of a steep acclivity, suddenly presented to his view a stupendous mass of rock that started abruptly from the thick woods which overhung the path cut through the side of the hill, and a scene of wild magnificence burst upon his sight.

Deep in the valley below, the Tavy flowed, winding through a country marked by all those varieties of beauty so characteristic of the matchless vales of Devon. Numberless rocks intercepted its course, and broke the clear current of its waters into foaming eddies and precipitous falls. The woods, deep and intricate, hung feathering down the sides of the opposite hills, here and there broken by some stately mass of rock that reared itself above their tops, and stood like a lordly castle, weatherbeaten and ivy-grown, but unsubdued in strength and grandeur. Many a cottage peeped out, whose smoke, thin and blue, curled upwards, "through tops of the high trees," and gave that assurance of habitation which adds a feeling of cheerfulness to the natural beauties of a landscape. Looking straight onward, John Fitz gazed with deep interest upon the only object, amidst so many replete with beauty, that could now fix his attention, the town which gave him birth. It lay at the extremity of the valley, about two miles distant from where he stood, the clustering pinnacles of the ancient abbey and many a noble edifice, now long since destroyed, glittering in the gleam of sunshine with which they were illumined.

He paused a moment as his eye drunk in with delight the prospect before it ; for who, even in the midst of sorrow, can view their birth-place, after long absence, without some feeling of deep and softening interest. This feeling, however, was but momentary ; for a thousand sad reflections and heartrending suspicions arose in his mind, and the tears of tenderness, which old and kind sensations had caused to start into his eyes at the first sight of his home, were soon chased from his cheek by the passionate recollections he cherished of his own supposed injuries. He dashed them off with his hand, and, unable longer to bear his own thoughts, struck hastily forward down the steep road, as if, by the rapidity of his pace, he would fly the fiend that tracked his footsteps. But where could he fly from its influence ; since, alas ! what evil spirit can more cruelly beset a human breast than that which calls up the unrelenting passions of jealousy and revenge ?

He now drew nearer to the town, and, as he approached, heard the bells of its old church ringing a merry peal, as if to welcome him home ; but these lively sounds, as they fell upon his ear, only called up a deep sigh, and he thought that the toll of the same bells, as a last knell for the dead, would have been more in unison with his feelings.

In this state of mind the unfortunate John Fitz prepared to enter the outskirts of the town, where we shall for the present leave him.

It is to other scenes we must conduct the reader ; to the halls, the bridal halls of Kilworthy, now filled with numerous noble guests, who, according to a custom prevalent in England, and especially in the West, at the date of our narrative, after the marriage of persons of any consequence, were for one week daily to feast, to revel and rejoice, to carouse deeply, and to share in all that rude magnificence which, in the observance of nuptial festivities, was not then entirely free from some remains of barbarism.

It was now the third day since the performance of the ceremony, and every thing in the house still retained the splendour of bridal honours. The numerous guests of Glanville, attired in new and rich dresses, each wearing his "bride-knot of many colours," the bridesmaids still displaying on their brows the garland that proclaimed their service, with branches of rosemary tied upon their sleeves, feasted, danced, sang, and amused themselves with every variety of entertainment that the place and the customs of the time would admit.

The party had just concluded their dinner. The bride, pleading delicate health as an excuse for declining the dance, had retired with the bridegroom into a withdrawing-room situated near the hall. Glanville's age also excused him from being present ; and one or two persons more attended him as he joined Sir Nicholas Slanning and his lady. The dejected looks and pale cheeks of the bride did not escape observation, and many present whispered, after she had retired, that perhaps the next general assembly of friends at Kilworthy might be to attend a funeral, unless some great change took place in the health of Lady Slanning, who was of late so altered that she seemed as if one of those evil women, the witches of the time, had laid upon her a fatal spell.

To such conjectures did the gross superstitions of the time give birth. But little did these gossips think that it was the

"witch Melancholy" who corroded the heart and wasted in secret the youthful bloom and health of the lovely bride. Whatever they thought of Lady Slanning's indisposition, it did not in the least diminish the eager desire of most persons present to enjoy the festivities given in honour of her marriage, and all joined in the revelry.

As Margaret sat between her guardian and her husband, listening with composure to the kind plans which they proposed for the recovery of her health and spirits, the voice of music, as it rang gaily through the hall, frequently interrupted, by its loud bursts, their discourse. The full and rich tones of the harp, the shrill viol, the flute, and even "the ear-piercing fife," with the "spirit-stirring drum," all united, together with other instruments, to form a volume of enlivening sounds. Those sounds had now risen to the utmost height, when, on a sudden, the music ceased, and a slight disturbance, as of confusion, seemed for a moment to suspend the revels in the hall.

A violent rush was then heard, the door of the withdrawing-room burst open, and Margaret, whose eyes were turned in that direction, uttered a dreadful shriek, and sunk on the ground, as John Fitz, pale as a corpse that has "burst its cerements," and revisits the earth for some purpose of fearful import, stood fixed and immovable as a statue before her; his eye wild and disordered, yet flashing fire in its wanderings, and the very faculty of speech bound up and suspended by the intensity of passion that shook every nerve in his body.

To describe the terror, the horror, that seized on every one around, at the sight of this unexpected apparition, would be impossible. The menials and domestics, and even some of the guests, past whom John Fitz had forced his way in his passage to the withdrawing-room, mistaking him for a real spectre, who came from the other world for the purpose of claiming his betrothed, fled before him, screaming and shrieking with affright. The more sober part of the guests, who believed in his bodily presence, astounded by so sad a chance as his return at such a moment, drew together and whispered their fears to each other in parties in the hall; whilst a few, who saw the desperate man was armed, endeavoured to follow him into the withdrawing-room, in order to prevent bloodshed. But Fitz had repelled their interference with a fierceness so reckless of all consequences that each, intent on his own safety, had shrunk back appalled by that more than human power to excite terror which

deep passion bestows upon one who acts under its immediate sway.

Sir Nicholas Slanning, who felt in its full force the unutterable misery of Fitz's return, both to himself and to his bride, became so agitated as scarcely to be capable of assisting Lady Slanning, who had fallen to the ground in a swoon. Glanville, though shocked and discomposed, retained his presence of mind in this trying moment, and, fearful of the sad exposure of private feelings and private circumstances which might be the result of so agitating a crisis, requested a trusty friend, who was present, to go and state to the guests the sudden illness of Lady Slanning, and on no account to suffer any one of them to pass into the withdrawing-room. Lady Howard and Francis Glanville, the youngest son of the judge, alone remained to witness what followed.

Frank Glanville ran towards a table, where some refreshments had been placed, and snatching up a cup containing water, threw part of its contents over the face of Margaret, to recall her from the state of insensibility into which she had fallen. Slanning supported his wife in his arms ; and the elder Glanville stepped forward, caught Fitz by the cloak, and addressed something to him, in the vain hope to still his passion, but Glanville scarcely knew what he said, and not a word of it was even heard by the incensed youth to whom it was spoken.

All these circumstances passed, as it were, in a few moments, in far less time than they have necessarily occupied in the narration. Lady Slanning shewed some signs of returning life ; and as Sir Nicholas bent over her, offering her such aid as his distraction would admit, the first person who spoke, so as to be understood by all present in this general confusion, was John Fitz, who, in a tone that passion rendered appalling, exclaimed, as he bent his eyes on Margaret, with a look in which even at this moment tenderness seemed to struggle with indignation—"She was mine—mine in the sight of God ; but, oh, the villain who has robbed me of her !—*You* villain, *you* have done this ; and as there is a God who shall judge between us, as I am a man, you shall answer it."

Fitz drew his sword, and, hurried on by his distraction, attempted to rush upon Slanning as he spoke. Frank Glanville caught him by the arm, and the Judge also interposed : "Let me pass," cried Fitz, "let me meet the villain ; justice demands it. He is coward as well as villain if he denies my right

to vengeance. He has betrayed me, and I will have his blood."

"Alas!" said Glanville, "you are beside yourself with passion. Listen to reason; talk not of blood, but be patient."

"Patient!" exclaimed Fitz; "you talk to me, old man, of patience who have never known my injuries. There stands the wretch who has undone me. I trusted that man as my friend, my bosom friend—he swore to be faithful; I loved him as myself; not a heart beat warmer from man to man than mine did to him—and how has he requited me? betrayed my trust, seduced the affections of all that was dear to me on earth, entrapped me, laid in wait for me, imprisoned me, and would have consigned me to a fate worse than death, whilst he married that faithless, that ungrateful woman."

The vehemence with which John Fitz thus vented his reproaches for a while silenced all opposition. Slanning, however, so far collected himself as to say calmly and firmly, "As God shall judge between us, I am innocent of these charges. I believed you dead."

"It is false, a foul and insolent falsehood," exclaimed Fitz; "but how could I expect other? You knew I was living; knew it by a thousand circumstances, knew it by my letters, knew it by the very means you took to entrap me, waylaying me with a crew of ruffians on the very spot where I had requested you to meet me on my return home. Dare you deny it? Do so if you will, to your very throat I would tell you that you are a traitor and liar."

"I will not endure this," said Slanning, "you have foully slandered me; but this is not the place for brawls, I will meet you at a proper moment."

"There is no moment so fitting as the present," said Fitz. "Unhand me, Sir," he continued, endeavouring to escape from Glanville, who still interposed between him and the object of his fury. "Unhand me; I will have vengeance for my wrongs."

"Alas!" said Glanville, "if you have forgot all that is due to the laws of man, remember what you owe to God."

"May that God," cried Fitz, "May God pour down vengeance in bitter retribution upon the villain's head! May his marriage become as accursed to him as those feelings he has roused in my breast to be as a hell to me on earth! May he——"

"Oh Heaven!" exclaimed Lady Slanning, who had recovered

the use of her senses, and now, for the first time, made an effort to speak, "Would you wish me so much ruin?"

"You have ruined me," cried Fitz, "and that without remorse." As he said this, he fixed his eye on Margaret; and the sight of her pale, disordered, but still most lovely countenance, bathed in tears, and full of that expression of deep sorrow which subdues the fiercest anger, calmed even his. The current of his feelings changed; he dropped the sword he had still retained in his hand, though Glanville had held him back, so that he could not use it; and, bursting by a violent effort from all who opposed him, rushed up to Margaret, caught her by the hand, and fixing his eyes upon her face, with a look that spoke the unutterable agony of his mind, he said, "And could you, Margaret, be so deceived—could you forget me? Look upon me, Margaret; though changed, much worn, and changed by suffering, I am the same—the same John Fitz, to whom, in hours of happiness and love, you plighted your faith and gave your affection; and he gave you all that man could give to woman—faith, love, constancy—his hopes, his honour, his peace. Soul and body he devoted to you; and loved you, may be, till Heaven itself became jealous of too much affection thus given to an earthly creature—and now to lose you! Oh! Margaret, how have you pierced the heart of him who would have died rather than the least sorrow should but have touched your peace!"

He dropped the hand of Margaret as he spoke; she could only answer him by her deep and convulsive sobs. He still gazed upon her, a moment in silence, as the elder Glanville spoke apart to Sir Nicholas Slanning.

"It was for your sake, Margaret," he continued, unheeding the presence of any one, for despair is reckless of all forms, as well as of common prudence—"It was for your sake that I resisted the will of my father; for your sake was I banished my home—my country. I have bled, I have lingered in a dungeon since we parted, suffering sickness, hardship, and want; but one thought enabled me to bear all—the image of Margaret came to me in my prison, like a spirit of light in the darkness of despair. That dear image bid me hope and live, and I cherished it in my bosom; but now it seems I cherished it as the viper, to rise and sting me." A tear started into his eye; he passed his hand across his forehead, and dashed it off. "It is in vain to struggle; my heart is not of stone nor steel; it will melt; it will soften at the thought of what *has* been; whilst at the sight of thee, Mar-

garet, though so basely stolen from me, my resolves, hardened as they are by injury, seem to melt away like ice before the sun."

Powerful was that remembrance of the past which could thus act on the soul of Fitz at such a moment; and, as he poured forth his reproaches, in a tone so softened by deep feelings that every accent which fell from his lips struck as an arrow on the heart of Margaret, she remained motionless—the image of despair!

"But I will shake off this weakness," continued Fitz; "I will act as becomes a man. Sir Nicholas Slanning, once more I charge you, in the sight of God and of the world, with treachery the most base and cruel; I demand an answer, and I will enforce one."

"I am ready to give it," said Sir Nicholas Slanning; "yet, when I tell you not to be too hasty, to beware what you do, I am prompted by no dishonourable fears. To save you the pangs of remorse, when you shall hereafter find how much you are in error, I now offer you the fullest explanation. I thought you dead, else I had never wedded with this lady."

"It is false," cried Fitz; "your words are as hollow as your heart—I can prove them false—I can adduce the clearest proofs—I will not hear your vindication. You caused me to be seized by ruffians, to be bound hand and foot, and held as a prisoner, the very night before your accursed marriage. I know it all."

"This charge is mere madness," replied Slanning; "at another time I could repel it with the same vehemence with which it is made; now I can allow for those feelings of disappointment that have unsettled your brain. But this lady is my wife; and it is now my part to protect her from violence. She shall retire—in the meantime, hear these gentlemen, if you will not listen to me. They, perhaps, may show your errors in a proper light. Still I am willing to satisfy you, at your own time, in any manner you may require."

"And you should remember, sir," said Lady Howard, addressing John Fitz, "that you do great injustice to Sir Nicholas Slanning, in thus violently accusing him of treachery; inasmuch as he could not have wedded this lady without her own free consent. I will venture to affirm that no force was laid on her actions, and that no undue advantage was taken to gain from her a compliance in this matter. Truth demands that I should say that even Sir Nicholas Slanning himself, as well as her guardian, Glanville, was surprised by the suddenness of her consent."

"Is it so?" said Fitz, as a glow of passionate resentment again

overspread his cheek—"Is it really so?—Tell me, was it her own free, unbiassed act to wed with this man?"

"You seem to look to me for an answer," said Glanville, "and in justice to Sir Nicholas I must say that, though the marriage of this lady was not unadvised, yet it took place by her own free consent, and that given somewhat suddenly."

Margaret wrung her hands in agony.

"Was it so indeed?" said Fitz. "And is it for one so light, so faithless, that I endure this shame and misery?—Yes, yes, it was time to wed, it was full time to cast me off, when I was lingering a poor, despised prisoner, the tenant of a foreign dungeon; it was time to take the hand of a noble gallant, who stood ready to receive her, a willing partner in her treachery."

"I believed you dead," faintly murmured Margaret, from lips that looked as white and almost as fixed as monumental marble. "I could vindicate myself, but I am the wife of another, and I dare not."

"You shall offer no vindication," said Sir Nicholas Slanning, who now fired in his turn into passion, "You are mine, your honour is mine; let him who dares to doubt it, appeal to me; I will maintain it with my life. Come, madam, this scene is not befitting your presence; retire to your chamber; Lady Howard will bear you company."

"You shall not tear her from me," cried Fitz, wildly; for, exasperated by contending passions, frenzy seemed to rule his mind,—“you shall not, I will hear her speak!"

"Stand off, sir," said Slanning, "she is my wife. Your interference may no longer be endured. You will neither hear reason nor submit to its dictates."

An attempt at contest now ensued. The elder and the younger Glanville again interposed; and Margaret, summoning a resolution to her aid she had not yet displayed, looked imploringly upon Fitz as she said, "Hear me! be silent; I entreat, I conjure you, hear me." There was a pause, and she continued, "God shall one day bring every hidden thing to light. I solemnly declare that I believed you dead—how I sorrowed for your death is known but to the Searcher of all hearts. My ill-fated marriage was brought about by circumstances so strange, yet so irresistible, that even now they seem to me like a distempered dream. I was once yours, my word was plighted, but I am now the wife of this gentleman. Let there be peace between you. Forget me

—forget for ever the name of Margaret; but do not repeat the curse you would but now have called down upon me.”

“Did I, Margaret,” said Fitz, who was again softened by the emphatic manner in which she had addressed him. “Could I curse you? O no, no, it was madness! I will daily pray for a thousand blessings on your head. Forget you! When that hour comes that blots the memory of every thing living on earth I will forget—but not till then. Slanning, if you have a heart capable of pity for my feelings, take my sword, pierce my heart.”

“Grief has rendered him distracted,” said Glanville. “Retire, Sir Nicholas, bear off your lady; your presence does but irritate his feelings. Oh, my children,” continued the venerable man, “calm these stormy passions! Here is some great error; the sorrow of it is deep, alas! irremediable—yet God can work all things to his will. Be at peace, trust to him, hope for the best, and cease these dreadful contests that must end in loss both to body and soul. I will see this unhappy young man restored in safety to his father.”

Whilst the aged Glanville spoke Margaret was borne from the chamber, supported on the one side by her husband and on the other by the cruel Lady Howard, who, while she gazed on the victim of her arts and perfidy, as Margaret in a state almost of insensibility leant her head on the bosom of her enemy, felt not one pitying pang. Her only feeling was that of bitter envy to see how dearly her unhappy rival was beloved by John Fitz, even at the moment when lost to him for ever.

After Margaret was gone the unfortunate young man, exhausted by the unremitting sufferings he had undergone both in mind and body, sunk down nearly speechless on a chair. Deep passion, like the paroxysm of a fever, had for a time given to him a more than natural degree of strength. But that first burst of passion was passed, and he now felt, when deprived of its unnatural stimulus, even a greater degree of weakness than he had before experienced. Glanville performed those offices dictated by humanity with the kindest attention. He sent his son Francis to break as gently as possible to Sir Hugh Fitz the intelligence that his beloved son John was yet alive, and to state the unhappy circumstances under which he so abruptly returned, and had made his appearance at Kilworthy.

Suffice it to say that Sir Hugh, in whose breast a strange combination of joy and sorrow now mingled together—joy to find his dear boy alive, and sorrow for his deep distress—set off

instantly, accompanied by nearly all his household, for Kilworthy. We pass in silence the meeting between the father and son. The good old man caused John Fitz to be removed with the greatest care to Fitz-ford, where nature was unable to support such accumulated sufferings, and a dangerous fever with which the unhappy youth was seized threatened to end at once both his sorrows and his life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Patience, unmoved, no marvel though she pause ;
They can be meek, that have no other cause.
A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,
We bid be quiet, when we hear it cry ;
But were we burden'd with like weight of pain,
As much, or more, we should ourselves complain.
LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

THE natural strength of John Fitz's constitution, assisted by youth, and the unremitting care of his affectionate father, finally enabled him to triumph over that raging fever which threatened his life. After his recovery, so soon as he could bear the mention of the subject, Sir Hugh informed him of the circumstances attending Margaret's marriage with Slanning, as far at least as they were known to him, and insisted much on the probability of the truth of Slanning's statement respecting it ; since he had himself never received one of those letters which John Fitz had written to him during his imprisonment.

The astonishment of the son, on hearing this, may be readily understood ; and he summoned to his presence his servant, Andrew Morton, to whose care they had been committed, and who had undertaken to get them conveyed in safety to England. Andrew, who had an impenetrable effrontery, still insisted, without in the least deviating from his first tale, on the account he had always given of the transaction ; namely, that he had consigned those letters to the charge of a certain merchant who was allowed to traffic in the town where his master was held a prisoner. He, Morton, had, on certain assurances of safety (for so he varnished this tale of falsehood), given all the letters

into the hands of this merchant. What became of them afterwards it was, of course, quite beyond his power to say ; they, probably, had been stopped in their passage by the enemy. As to the one written as soon as his master, John Fitz, arrived in England, to Sir Nicholas Slanning, Andrew Morton having himself, as he offered to attest on oath, forwarded it to Sir Nicholas, he could not but think it must have been received by him, unless indeed the bearer, as often happened, might have been robbed by the outlaws who infested the country, and who had made his master a captive.

This was all that resulted from the examination of the treacherous servant, whose generous master never suspected that he was capable of betraying him. But though John Fitz, from the fact that his father had been deceived by the report of his death, was in some degree persuaded to think Slanning less treacherous than he had at first believed, yet a doubt still hung upon his mind respecting that last fatal letter. Had Slanning received it or not ? it was but a doubt after all ; yet such a one as was sufficient to keep alive the bitter feelings with which the unhappy young man ever remembered his successful rival.

Painful as were these feelings, yet, in one respect, they were productive of good. Pride supported him in bearing his injuries and his sorrows like a man ; it gave him that degree of strength which enabled him to assume before the world an aspect bordering on indifference as to the late events ; he affected to join in those sports and amusements congenial to his station and his years. But the effort was too painful long to be maintained in public ; and, changing on a sudden into the opposite extreme, he resolved once more to court danger and death in a foreign land. He was alone deterred from this resolution by the tears, the entreaties, the sorrows of his aged father, who, desirous to see him settled and happy, at the instigation of his wife, Lady Fitz, now urged upon his son a proposal of marriage with the wealthy Lady Howard, against whose person and accomplishments nothing could be said.

To bring about a marriage between her son and a person of such rank and consequence as Lady Howard appeared to the proud Lady Fitz a point above all things to be desired. But she went imprudently to work, and by straining the bow nearly broke it ; for, irritated by her constantly tormenting him with the subject, John Fitz not only openly slighted this haughty woman, but in order to avoid her presence as well as the solicita-

tions of his mother, adopted a course of life that gave his father the deepest regrets, as it kept his son much apart from him.

To explain this, we must here state that at the period of our narrative Lidford Castle was held to be a place of some importance, being capable of defence in case of any public disturbance; and was used also as a prison, where criminals were not only confined but tried, and sometimes executed. The late governor had died suddenly; and on hearing of the event, John Fitz made a journey to London to solicit the interest of his friends to obtain for him the vacant post; a gloomy and solitary employ, though one of honour, that was perfectly in unison with the present frame of his mind.

General Norris, under whom he had served in Flanders, introduced him to the court of the maiden queen; and Elizabeth, never indifferent to grace and manly beauty, was struck with the appearance of Fitz, notwithstanding the settled melancholy of his countenance. And so much was his bravery extolled, whilst acting in her army in the Netherlands, that she not only made him governor of Lidford Castle but bestowed on him the honour of knighthood with her own hand. On his return to Devon, Sir John Fitz immediately sequestered himself in Lidford, where he led a strange, moody, and solitary life, of which we shall have occasion to speak more largely hereafter.

Sir Nicholas and Lady Slanning next demand our attention. Their marriage, as it may readily be supposed, was not one capable of exciting envy. The strict principles of Margaret made her fully conscious of what she owed to duty; and that now she was the wife of another it was weak, if not criminal, to look back with fond recollections and bitter regrets on the past. Influenced by these just reflections, for there is a plain sense and no sophistry in the laws of virtue, she was rigid in the observance of her duties as a wife; but notwithstanding all her sense of duty, she could not banish from her mind what, indeed, continually presented itself to her, by the force of daily circumstances, how little congeniality there was between her feelings, her ideas, her tastes and those of her husband.

Margaret's thoughts were melancholy; her conversation naturally partook of their colour. She felt the society of the world oppressive, and she shunned it as much as possible, without absolutely refusing a compliance with the will of her husband. She became more than ever zealous in her religious opinions; but her religion, so enthusiastically pursued, seemed to speak a

mind that sought to find in it merely a shelter from misery, rather than a cheering influence. All these circumstances did not escape the notice of Sir Nicholas Slanning, who, though a person of less refinement in mind and manners than his wife, possessed a shrewd penetration in observing her state of feelings.

He saw she was unhappy. His self-love was offended by the cast of melancholy which she could neither banish from her countenance nor from her manner to him, and he acted unwisely; for, instead of suffering time to take its course, instead of endeavouring by a patient tenderness to conquer her early inclinations, as well as her sorrows and regrets, he reproached her severely with her coldness; and thus by sharp words increased the very bitterness of those feelings.

Thus by slow, yet certain degrees, dissatisfaction, coldness, and want of mutual confidence, that deadly blow to married peace, grew up between Slanning and his wife. Margaret learnt to fear her husband; and fear locked her heart and lips. She felt deeply his unkindness, and kept those feelings to herself; and thus brooded over sorrow till it became habitual from indulgence.

We must now speak of Standwich. As this part of our narrative is much mixed up with the public transactions of the eventful times in which he lived, we shall give it as briefly as possible; not wishing to introduce in our pages more matters of a public nature than are absolutely necessary for the development of the melancholy tale in which he bore so prominent a part. His machinations, and those of the desperate men who took the lead in the Great Plot, as it was called, which by its premature discovery ended in bringing the Scottish Queen to the block, are known, we presume, to all our readers, at least as far as the chief actors are concerned. Standwich, it will be remembered, we left not many months before, active in the cause of treason and rebellion, and exulting in the promised success of this dreadful undertaking. For some time all things ran smoothly; but, though still and deep were those dark waters of strife that threatened to engulf Elizabeth, their course was watched by a calm and steady eye. Not a movement was made by the conspirators, not a plan concerted, not a correspondence held with their most distant associates, but was noted and detected by the great statesman Walsingham, whose means were so secret, yet so decisive, that, when these designs were on the very eve of consummation, he caused every leader in London to be seized,

and placed in such sure keeping that not a hope was left to them.

Ballard, the friend of Standwich, Babbington, and others, suffered ; and we need only add that many of these rebels confessed the names of their associates before they were executed. One of their number betrayed George Standwich, as well as Cuthbert Mayne and Sir Thomas Morley. Information of this was instantly conveyed to Exeter, accompanied by a warrant from the Privy Council to apprehend the rebels ; and by the treachery of one of his agents Standwich was arrested, and in a few hours lay a prisoner, heavily ironed, in Lidford Castle.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

We'll no more meet, no more see one another ;—
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter !

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us.

SHAKESPEARE.

LIDFORD, whose romantic glen, waterfall, bridge, and castle, form such objects of delight to the traveller in the west of England, now becomes a scene of importance in our tale ; nor can we pass unnoticed a spot so striking, from its traditionary as well as its local interest. Though now scarcely a village, Lidford was once of so much consequence that Julius Cæsar with his army is said to have been there entertained on his second arrival in Britain. It was pillaged by the Danes, when they burnt the original abbey of Tavistock, and rose into opulence during the Saxon heptarchy. This romantic place is situated about seven miles from Tavistock, and affords a boundless field for the lover of nature in her most wild and picturesque forms.

The castle, which still exists, though fallen into decay, and disrobed of its mantle of ivy looks but a plain and heavy mass, was once a structure of considerable strength ; at no period, however, celebrated for the beauty of its architecture. It was a square stone building, with walls of prodigious thickness, and stands upon a large raised mound of earth. Before the entrance of the castle was a spacious area, with a gentle slope, inclosed by

two parallel mounds. At the termination of this, the ground becomes precipitous, and continues its steep descent, the opposite side of the dell being equally precipitous, till it meets the river near the bridge. The castle, standing on a spot possessing such natural advantages, must have been a post of peculiar strength; as every approach to it was cut off, except that to the north-west.

From this elevation the river is seen, after passing the bridge and chasm, to wind through the deep wooded glen, at the end of which it receives the waters of the cascade. We ought here to notice, that though the castle of Lidford was too confined and inconvenient to admit of the governor residing there constantly, yet on occasions of emergency he retired within its walls; at other times he lived in a spacious house, near the castle and town, of which at the present day not the smallest vestige remains.

Having said thus much of Lidford, and formerly of the manner of life pursued by Sir John Fitz, the governor, we must now turn our attention within the prison walls of the castle, where George Standwich had been committed after his arrest. The dungeon in which he was immured (and which may still be seen by the curious traveller) was underground—a small, narrow, and damp apartment, with walls whose thickness seemed designed to laugh to scorn the power of time itself. The huge stones of which they were composed supported many a strong ring and iron chain, the ensigns of that captivity here to be found in all its most rigid forms. The air, from the want of a free circulation, smelt earthy and unwholesome; and there was nothing to relieve the desolation of the place, except a lamp that hung from the groined ceiling, and threw around a flickering and uncertain light. Windows there were none; and the dungeon was only accessible by a ladder, thrust down from a trap-door that communicated with the apartment above.

In this cell sat George Standwich; his limbs reclined upon a heap of straw spread on the ground, his back resting against the wall, his head bent upon his bosom, and his hands secured by a chain of some length, fastened to one of those rings or staples in the wall.

In his countenance might now be seen no expression of sorrow; but a fixed, stern, and unmoved demeanour, that shewed the hardened determination of his mind to bear all extremes with firmness and constancy: a conduct which adds so much of dig-

nity to adverse fortune, as in some measure to command our respect even for the criminal.

Whilst Standwich thus sat reclining in his cell, on the third day after his arrest, at the usual hour of receiving food he observed, when the ladder was let down for the purpose of conveying it to him, that another person followed the attendant with some caution; and, as the man re-ascended after doing his duty, the stranger said to him softly, "I will not tarry long, do you stay for me in the chamber above, and all will be well."

The attendant quitted the dungeon, drawing up the ladder after him as usual, and left Standwich alone with his new companion. The prisoner looked up, as his visitant doffed the large hat he wore slouched upon his head, so as to shade his face, and threw aside his cloak. Standwich recognised the white beard, and the shrewd withered features of Levi the Jew.

"Do you know me, Captain Standwich?" said the old man; "I am come to seek you out in the day of your captivity, and to render back, as far as so poor a man as I am may do it, that good deed you once did to me; I have not forgot that, but for the strength of thy arm and thy good bow, I had fallen before the fury of a bear of the forest which pursued me, but thou didst slay the beast, even as did David the lion in the pit upon a snowy day."

"And how came you hither?" inquired Standwich. "I want nothing that you can do, old man,—leave me to my fate."

"But I will not leave you to your fate," replied Levi. "How I came hither, I will tell anon. Betsy Grimal, who dares not approach near your prison, lest she should fall within the bonds of your oppressors, has been with me."

"What to do?" cried Standwich eagerly.

"Nothing but this," answered Levi; "she counselled me, if I would render you a service, that I should first apprise the Lady Slanning of your condition; for she averred, that the wife of Sir Nicholas was bound to you by some strange ties, that could only be broken by death."

"And have you done this?" said Standwich.

"I have," replied Levi. "Lady Slanning knows you are a prisoner, for the sake of your political practices and opinions; for the sake of your faith; under a warrant from the State. This done, Betsy Grimal bade me next seek out one Andrew Morton, a servant of Sir John Fitz, and but lately appointed by

his master head keeper of the prisoners in this castle. Morton, she said, was bound to you for services you rendered him in the Low Countries, when he had some connection with you. She bid me give the fellow gold, and ask his help to gain admision to you. I have done all these things, and at some venture of my own safety I have come hither to show you that a Jew can be grateful to the Christian to whom he owes life."

"You are come, then," said Standwich, "to see him die. I am ready to meet death; and if I sorrow for aught it is not for my own fate, but for the fate of those who have perished in a cause I would have given a thousand lives, had they been mine, to save from shipwreck. Can you, Levi, tell me any tidings of my unhappy friends?"

"Tidings!" exclaimed Levi; "ay, and such tidings as I think will go nigh to vex thy soul to death. Thy friends are beset with an evil spirit, that makes them rush on their own destruction. Sir Thomas Morley, even as did Absalom, hath stolen the hearts of the men of Israel. He has joined his men with Cuthbert Mayne, and they have reared the ensign of rebellion near Launceston; even now they are about to assault its strong castle. Sir Nicholas Slanning, and many other valiant men, have gone out against them, by their own free will, to assist the troops of her Majesty in subduing this sudden disorder."

"Sir Nicholas Slanning!" cried Standwich, "is he also against the true cause? I thought that in heart he was an enemy to Elizabeth, and to her heretical rule; and he is leagued against my friends."

"It cannot be that he is an enemy to Elizabeth," said the Jew, "since he has drawn the sword in her cause, and to uphold her right against the supporters of the Queen of Scots."

"And should they succeed," said Standwich, with a vivacity of manner he had not yet shewn in his discourse, "we may yet hope to raise a formidable insurrection in the west, as Westmoreland did in the North; other counties may follow our example, and all may yet be well."

"Succeed!" cried Levi, "never; do not deceive thy mind, George Standwich, with such a hope. As well might you think with that single arm of thine to root up the strong set oak that stands as the lord of the forest, as think, by a band of desperate men, to overturn the throne of Elizabeth."

"Yet," said Standwich, "while my brave comrades are in

arms, there is hope ; and I, I am held down here by these base bonds, confined, chained, like a coward and a slave."

"Alas ! alas !" said the Jew, "better think, George Standwich, of some way to save thee, than talk thus wildly of what cannot be. Trust me, these rebels will soon be put down, since they are but a handful of men compared to the force that comes against them, as I hear, from up the far country. Think of thy own safety. Hast thou no friend who may ask mercy for thee of those who sit in high places ? Hast thou no friend near the court of Elizabeth ?"

"None," replied Standwich. "There breathes not a creature connected with this government who would ask mercy for me, even had I had the means to bribe him to it."

"If it be so," said Levi, "thy danger is great indeed ; for as truly as thy soul liveth there is but a step between thee and death."

"And let it come," cried Standwich ; "I am prepared. There is but one wish I have on earth ; but that, alas ! will be denied me."

"Speak it," said Levi, "for I am come to serve thee, and I will not do the good deed by halves. I have some small store, the fruit of my labours. If shekels of gold can serve thee, or help thy enlargement, I will tell down the tale for thy sake, that it may be well with thee, and that thy soul may live."

"No," replied Standwich, "I would see my child. I would once more clasp my daughter to my arms before I die."

"Thy child ! thy daughter !" exclaimed the Jew, in astonishment ; "art thou a father ?"

"Ay," said Standwich ; "but my child knows not that she has a father."

"What mean you ?" cried Levi ; "you have always been a man of mystery, George Standwich ; but I never guessed you had one tie on earth like this."

"Know it now, then," said Standwich ; "and, so help me holy saints of heaven ! as I am so friendless at this moment, I will even trust thee with the whole truth, and, since death must come, with a dying father's last blessing to his child."

"Death must come to all," said the Jew ; "for we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again ; and to thee, may be, the dark hour will come soon, unless something can be done for thy deliverance."

"Hear me, I beseech you, and listen with attention," said

Standwich ; "and, though thou art a Jew, yet I will trust thee, Levi, hast thou ever heard the story of the Lady Page, who, some years ago, died by the sentence of the laws?"

"For the murder of her husband," said the Jew ; "she was burnt. She murdered that husband for the guilty love of another."

"And I am that man," said Standwich.

The Jew dropped the staff which he held in his hand at the hearing of these words. "You!" he exclaimed; "are you that wretched man?"

"Yes," cried Standwich; "and Margaret, the wife of Slanning, is the innocent offspring of our guilt."

"Holy father Abraham!" cried the Jew, "is she so cursed even from her mother's womb? Nay die, and never tell thy secret, for surely to know it will make her mad; she is happy in her ignorance. Tell her this, and there will be no more spirit in her. The thought of it will be death to her, and so shalt thou quench the coal that is left, and neither name nor remainder shall be to thee upon earth."

"She is my child," said Standwich; "and, sinful man that I am, I have yet some feelings common to man. I love my daughter, and I will clasp her to my heart before I fall. Have you ever been a father, Jew?"

"Ay, marry have I," said Levi; "though I am now an old, a widowed, and a childless man. I was once both husband and father. Ruth brought me three fair children to bless my knees; my sons were to me like the young palm-trees and cedars of Lebanon, and my daughter as the polished corner of the Temple. But he who gave took away, and the poor Jew was left to mourn like the sparrow that sitteth alone upon the house-top. I know a father's love is strong as death."

"It is," said Standwich, "and yields but to death. Levi, lend me thy tablets; I know thou hast them about thee."

"What to do?" inquired Levi.

"I will write to my child, and thou shalt bear the letter."

"May I do it with safety?" said Levi. "Surely there is danger in such traffic."

"There is none," replied Standwich; "you told me, but now, her husband, Sir Nicholas Slanning, was absent. She is the mistress of her own actions. Perhaps she may find the means to see me here; she may gain permission."

"True, true," cried Levi; "Sir Nicholas Slanning is gone out

with the men of war. I will do thy errand; but write quickly, for I may no longer tarry. Andrew Morton, who it seems is disposed to serve thee, as far as he may with safety to himself, bid me use despatch."

"He has good cause to serve me," said Standwich; "since, now I am a prisoner to his master, Sir John Fitz, I could tell that of him would ruin him for ever."

"Nay, do not," said the Jew, "as but for him I could never have gained admission here. He may be brought to serve you further; for I have given him that which makes faithful both Jew and Christian as the world goes. Andrew Morton, I see, cannot resist gold."

"That I know well indeed," said Standwich. "Rest thee Levi, on yonder bench, whilst I write to Margaret."

The Jew sat down as he was desired, and Standwich speedily completed his task. He then committed his letter to the care of Levi, giving him many charges and instructions as to the manner of the delivery.

"Thy words, George Standwich," said the Jew, "shall not fall to the ground, and I will bear them in mind as faithfully as did the widow of Tekoah the wise counsel of Joab, the captain of the hosts. Farewell to thee, unhappy man. Thou art not under the law; yet there is one law, and that is of nature, under which all men stand; and all agree to it, wherever the Father of nature is hallowed and known. It is the law which teaches that mercy comes from God alone. Seek to gain it, Standwich, for truly thou needest it; great are the sins thou hast laid upon thy soul."

After giving this wholesome counsel, the Jew made the signal to announce that he was ready to depart; and after another silent adieu, expressed by waving his hand, he left the miserable and guilty George Standwich to his own sad reflections.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Oh, forgive me my sins!
He that dies, pays all debts.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE must now conduct the reader once more to Fitz-ford, so long the habitation of the good old knight Sir Hugh Fitz, whose peculiarities and follies were more to be attributed to the age in

which he lived than to his natural understanding; as, in all things, save such as were the result of the prejudices he had adopted, he was a man both of sound sense and moral and religious principle. But all ages have their follies; and it is well known that, in the time of Elizabeth, many even of the wise, the learned, and the good, gave into the belief in judicial astrology, as well as into the pursuit of the grand Arcanum.

At the moment, however, in which we once more return to old Sir Hugh, folly seemed to have fled before that serious event, which often teaches wisdom, when nothing else can, the approach of death. The good old knight, as we have before stated, had received a shock both in mind and body, from the supposed death of his son, an event for which he reproached himself as the cause. From this shock he had never recovered; and whilst in such a state of weakness and imbecility it is much to be doubted if the additional trial to his frame of excess of joy at that son's return had not rather assisted to hasten his end than to arrest the progress of his decline. The change in his son's manners and mode of life had struck another blow on a mind already too feeble to bear anxious thought and wearying cares, so that nature at last gave up the struggle, and stood ready to yield another son of clay to the tyrant death, which, but for these things, might long have been kept at bay by the strength of a constitution that had given freshness and vigour to his old age.

Sir Hugh lay extended on his bed, his head and arms propped up by pillows, drawing his breath with pain, and now and then raising those eyes to heaven in which the watery rheum of dissolution had already settled, rendering dim every remaining spark of light and animation. The damps of death hung on his brow, and with pious care were from time to time wiped off by the hand of that beloved son, who now stood fixed, with a countenance all sorrow, by his side.

His wife was not present; for Lady Fitz was one of those persons whose refinement of feeling, anxious to spare itself, but less careful of the feelings of the dying, could not bear the sight of death. She had, therefore, shunned the partner of years of weal and woe, whilst the vital spark yet glimmered ere it expired; and but for the filial love of Sir John Fitz the deathbed of the old man would have been left to the attendance of menials and of Savegrace, the puritanical minister, who, during the latter years of Sir Hugh's life, had managed to find considerable favour in his sight.

Savegrace, though full of the fanatical precision of his sect, was nevertheless a well-meaning man; and he now held the Book of Life in his hand, his eyes dropping tears of pity, as he endeavoured to sustain, with comfortable hopes, the soul of the departing. In one corner of the darkened room, for the casements were partially closed, sat the old housekeeper, who now acted as nurse to her master in his last illness. She was busied between the care she bestowed upon observing the progress of something that was stewing in a pipkin on the fire for her patient, should he live to need it, and in watching the hand of an old-fashioned clock that hung near the chimney, and ticked loud and clear, as if it were the voice of time, which distinctly told out each moment to the dying man, till his last should be silenced in eternity.

When Savegrace had ended a prayer, old Sir Hugh seemed exhausted by the earnestness with which he had accompanied it. For a few minutes he appeared lost, but again recollecting himself, he stretched out his hand, and asked for his son, in a faint and hollow voice.

"I am here, my father," said John Fitz, endeavouring to speak firmly, so as not to discompose Sir Hugh: "I am at your side, waiting your commands. What would you have me do? Every word is sacred to me."

"Nothing, nothing, John Fitz," replied the feeble old man, as if forgetting the purpose for which he had asked for his son; "I would ask you nothing but to forgive me."

"Forgive *you*, my dear father!" said the son; "Oh, had I but followed your counsel I had been happy. But let it pass; it is gone for ever; and my greatest grief is now to think how little obedience I have shown to you. My dear father, you should forgive me."

"I have nothing to pardon," said the dying man; and, grasping his son's hand, he looked up in his face with an earnest expression, as he added, "I was the cause of great grief once to you, my dear boy; but as God, to whom I must account for every act of my life, truly knows, what I did I did for the best. I would say more, but breath fails me. Yet hear me. Lock in thy heart the last warning of a father. Oh, my son, there was an evil influence at thy birth, may God avert it! yet——"

John Fitz had too much kindness of heart to treat lightly the last counsel of a parent, from whatever motive it might be given. He promised, therefore, to listen with serious attention to what Sir Hugh, with much effort, endeavoured to communicate.

"My son," continued the old man, "there is a secret that lies on my heart as heavy as the hand of death itself. I would tell it you alone ; I cannot die with it upon my mind."

Savegrace quitted the bed, and joined the housekeeper, who, in this large chamber, was too far removed to hear what passed. He now talked to her in a whispering voice as the woman pointed with her finger to the dial, as if that formed a subject, or suggested one, for her discourse.

John Fitz supported Sir Hugh in his arms, and the old man's head rested on the bosom of his son. "John," said he, "my dear boy, whilst I lived I feared to tell you what I would now reveal in my last moments ; for it must not go down a secret with me to the grave.—At thy birth there was an evil influence of the heavens, that foretold a fearful end to thee, and that by *violent means*.—You have a hot temper, apt to stir at strife.—Promise me, before I die, that you will shun to draw your sword on occasions of quarrel—promise it, and I shall die in peace."

Sir Hugh spoke these words with so much effort, and in such a low tone, that it was only by the riveted attention with which John Fitz listened that he could understand their import. He did so, however, and replied in a voice full of emotion, "I will promise this, my dear father ; you shall be obeyed."

The father caught these expressions of obedience to his last counsel with eager joy ; for an instant his eye brightened, and life seemed to revive like the flame of a lamp which is seen to leap up but the moment before its total extinction. He pronounced the words, "God bless you, my son !" in a distinct voice ; but, in another moment, the transient animation of his countenance was gone, and the rigidity of death showed itself in every feature. He sunk back in a swoon, from which he never recovered.

In a few days, according to his last will, his body was consigned to the family vault in Tavistock church, where the monument of the house of Fitz may to this day be seen. His affectionate son saw the last rites paid to his memory, and returned with the small train (for Sir Hugh had directed his funeral to be as private as it could be consistent with his station) to Fitzford, of which mansion and its extensive dependencies Sir John Fitz was now the sole and melancholy heir.

CHAPTER XXX.

LIDFORD BRIDGE.

Pause, pilgrim ! pause, and cast thine eye below—
 Scarce the hoarse waves, from this o'ertowering height,
 Whilst shudd'ring horror dims the dizzy sight,
 Are seen, beneath the arch-crown'd gulph, to flow ;
 As through the trees, o'er the scathed rock that grow,
 A few pale sunbeams, from the realms of light,
 Like flashes through the thunder-clouds of night,
 Give thee the terrors of th' abyss to know.
 And thus, in mercy, from the mental eye
 Futurity her destined secrets veils ;
 In vain the prospect to explore we try,
 A gloomy cloud o'er all th' horizon sails ;
 We know but this—'Tis doom'd we all must die :
 For ruthless Death o'er Life's best hope prevails.

SONNET BY EDWARD A. BRAY.

WHEN Sir John Fitz returned to Fitz-ford, after attending the funeral of his father, he found a desolate home ; for his mother, under the plea of delicate health and worn spirits, had absented herself at the house of some noble friend in the neighbourhood, before the day of interment arrived. Fitz now experienced that deep gloom which always attends a return to the house whence the body of a beloved relative has but just been removed to the grave. He looked round the empty apartment that had been his father's, and could scarcely persuade himself that he should never again see him occupying his accustomed place, and busied in his accustomed studies. The very silence of the room chilled his feelings, since it called up to his imagination the noiseless empire of the grave. He left it shuddering, with feelings almost too acutely painful to be borne. His mother being absent, no tie of duty could at the present moment induce him to remain at the mansion. He called for his horse, and mounting the animal, as soon as it could be brought to the door, wrapped himself in his large mourning cloak, and attended only by Andrew Morton, who still occasionally followed his master, notwithstanding his new post at the castle, rode slowly forward on his return to Lidford.

He paused on Lidford-bridge, whose single and lofty arch grasps, as it were, the opposite sides of a deep and fearful chasm.

formed by some violent convulsion of nature. To look down is appalling. At first all seems dark, but as the eye dwells upon the abyss its obscurity gradually lessens, till the water may at length be dimly seen, breaking over its dark and narrow bed. The riven rocks of this chasm appear covered with moss and brambles, and here and there may be seen the bare and clinging roots of a few old trees that start from its rugged sides. The eye becomes riveted upon the gulph, and the ear listens to catch the deep murmurs of those waters that lie, dashing amidst the rocks beneath, hidden from the approach of man.

It was here Sir John Fitz often delighted to indulge that melancholy which, ever since the disappointment of his early hopes, had fixed itself upon his heart. He now stood gazing upon the foaming torrent, and found relief in the roar and ebullition of its waters, as they roused him from the torpor of his own feelings, from that chilling sensation of a mind without hope, a sensation which acts as a living death upon the sufferer, destroying every vital energy of his frame.

After indulging his feelings, he once more pursued the path on his return to his house at Lidford. It was sunset. The winds slept ; not a breath of air disturbed the deep stillness that reigned around, only broken by the murmurs of the waterfall, now softened by distance into a low and continued sound. Nature seemed to pause, as the great animator of her being, slowly sunk below the horizon in the midst of sullen clouds, whilst hues of the deepest purple glowed on the mountainous heights, and streams of light glittered on their summits.

On reaching his house, Sir John Fitz entered through a postern-door in the wall of a small garden by which it was surrounded. After closing the postern-gate, he walked on, and ascending a flight of steps that led to the door of his ordinary sitting-room, entered that apartment.

Scarcely had he done so, when his servant, Andrew Morton, who had apparently been on the watch for his return, hastened to tell him that a serving-varlet waited without, and impatiently desired an audience with him, saying he had a packet of some consequence he was charged to deliver into no hand but that of Sir John Fitz ; and, on being farther questioned, had refused to tell the name of the party from whom it came. Sir John bid Morton instantly conduct the varlet into his presence.

The servant who now appeared was not attired like the ordinary followers of the gentry of the period, but wore a plain dress

such as is usually seen upon the inferior attendants of a hunting field. He bent on one knee, with the utmost respect, before Sir John Fitz, yet did not open his lips till Andrew Morton had quitted the apartment, and closed the door. He then drew a packet from his bosom, arose, and presented it, saying, "I carried this to Fitz-ford, but your honour's porter told me, at the gate of that house, you had left it but lately for Lidford; I therefore rode on hither, as I was charged to deliver these to you with the utmost secrecy and despatch. I have obeyed the orders of my honourable mistress, and await your commands ere I return to her."

"And who is your mistress, young man?" said Fitz, as he took the packet from the hand of the servant.

"Lady Slanning," replied the varlet; "your honour will remember me, for I was a boy and a page to Mistress Margaret for many a year. I came with her from France, when she left that country for England."

The last part of this speech was scarcely understood by Sir John Fitz; for no sooner had he heard that the packet came from Lady Slanning, than he was seized with one of those cold shuddering which he was apt to experience on any sudden and unexpected mention of her name, and more especially when it was connected with former circumstances. A strange foreboding of something extraordinary took possession of his mind; but, unwilling to betray his strong emotion before the bearer of the packet, he retired into an adjoining closet, in order to break the seal.

He did so with a trembling hand; and what tongue shall speak his sensations when the first thing that met his sight was the ring—the very ring he had given to Margaret on that evening in which he had bade her a last adieu before he set off to join the Queen's forces in the Low Countries. For some moments he held the ring in his hand, gazing upon it with feelings of agonized remembrance. He then hastily opened the letter which accompanied it, and read as follows:

"Sir John Fitz,—I send you with these a token which, it must live in your remembrance, I received from your hand at a time to which I will not now refer me. It is the vow that did accompany that token makes me thus bold to desire of you its fulfilment, inasmuch as, by God's will, I need a full performance of the same. You did promise, in His name, that in whatever case I might hereafter stand, by the fortunes of this changeful

world, if I desired the service of a friend in the hour of my need, and would but send this same ring to you, you would obey the summons, and straight come to me; and such is the amazement of my strange grief, that I do now send you the token by a sure hand, and do furthermore desire of you to see me at my poor house with all convenient speed. As the matter is of moment, and may not be talked abroad without danger, I beseech you to come as private as may be, and to be attended only by one such follower as you may surely trust in this concern.

"Commending you to God's keeping, and committing these things to your honourable mind,

"I rest me, your afflicted friend,

"MARGARET SLANNING.

"From my poor house of Holwell, near Tavistock,

"this day of A.D. 1586."

The surprise of Sir John Fitz on reading this letter may be better conceived than described. He lost no time, however, in replying to it.

"My Lady Margaret" (Fitz could not bring himself to write the words, 'My Lady Slanning'):

"I have received both your letter and the token, and do acknowledge and entertain the right which the same gives to you over me. I am but newly returned to Lidford. Nevertheless I will straight be with your ladyship. I have a follower who I verily think may be trusted in all my matters. I shall be attended only by him, and will come as private as you desire. The better to do so, I would counsel you to give orders to the page who bears this, that I may be admitted into Holwell by the entrance which leads from the wood, for of a surety this meeting is not a matter for the world's debate. Commending you, my Lady Margaret, to the care of heaven, I rest me yours,

"The sorrowing,

"JOHN FITZ.

"From my house of Lidford,

"this day of A.D. 1586."

Fitz hastily sealed this letter, and dismissed the bearer of it. He then called into his closet Andrew Morton, commanded him instantly to saddle two horses, and bade Morton also attend him, as he was obliged to ride forth on a matter of some moment that would admit no delay. He then intimated to him that he was

about to ride to Holwell, as business of an important nature demanded that he should seek a private interview with Lady Slanning; charging him to name the circumstance to no one, and adding that he should leave him to hold the horses in the wood near the entrance to the house, till the interview was over.

Andrew Morton promised to observe all these directions; and being, as is already known to the reader, of a base and meddling turn of mind, he did not fail to watch, with a curious eye, every little circumstance of his master's behaviour, and to treasure up these observations in a memory that was tenaciously exact in gathering whatever might in any way, hereafter, prove to be worth remembering. His prying and curious eye also remarked the ring upon the finger of Sir John Fitz, as he drew on his riding-gloves. He had never before seen that ring upon his master's hand. He was sure he had it not on when he returned from Fitz-ford after the funeral; and Andrew's acute observation instantly conjectured the probability of its having come to his master by means of the serving varlet who had brought the packet and refused to tell whence he came.

CHAPTER XXXI.

For pleasure, and revenge,
Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice
Of any true decision.

SHAKSPEARE.

It frequently happens, when persons are the most desirous to act with prudence and caution, and take unusual pains to conceal what they are about to do, that some cross accident arises to defeat the object of their care. So was it now with Sir John Fitz, who was a man of honour, and went from no motive but such as an honourable mind might entertain, to obey the summons of Lady Slanning. Had he been content to have gone in the direct road, and boldly rode up to the house of Holwell by the ordinary way, he, in all probability, would have escaped observation. As it was, he encountered the very thing of all others he wished to avoid.

Holwell House, a noble edifice of the Elizabethan age (the ancient building is now gone, and a modern one occupies its

site), stood adjacent to Whitechurch Down, an open and elevated chain of hills near Tavistock. At this period, the house was approached in front by a long avenue of old trees, and was flanked by a wood of some extent, not a vestige of which now remains.

It was evening, and as Sir John Fitz crossed the Down in his road to Holwell he observed what, at the date of our narrative, was a thing of almost royal luxury, a coach drawn by six horses. This, he knew, belonged to the rich Lady Howard, whose taste for magnificence and large fortune enabled her to outshine in grandeur not only most of the heiresses of her day but even to vie in luxury with the greatest nobles in the land. The coach in question had excited much envy in the bosoms of many less wealthy dames; and its novelty and rarity, as well as the numerous retinue of trotting varlets on foot, and lackeys on horseback, by which it was generally attended, caused every inhabitant of the towns or villages, through which it passed, to run out and stare at it with the same degree of anxious curiosity and wonder as they would now feel when gazing upon the newly-invented steam-carriages of the present day.

The coach in question, however it might then be prized, was but a heavy and lumbering concern, of a most clumsy appearance. It was composed of leather, full of brass-headed nails, and could boast of not less than ten windows; two in front, the same number behind, with three on each side. As there were no folding steps, the door of the vehicle was made much lower than the body of the coach, so as to cover or inclose the little fixed stairs that enabled a person to step in and out. The coach was very low, ornamented with balls at each corner of the roof, like a hearse, and had four wheels, as stout, and nearly as broad, as those of a wagon. On one of the two leading horses sat a postillion, with his legs thrust into a pair of buckets, called jack-boots, whose fac-simile may be seen in use to this day upon the Continent. On the near wheel-horse sat another postillion, furnished with a long whip, convenient for lashing the first four horses, and his brother postilion, if necessary, into the bargain.

The fair mistress of this moving house had but newly obtained it from London; and on this evening was trying both its comforts and its strength on Whitechurch Down, previous to venturing her person in it upon a long journey of some extent and importance, to the good town of Plymouth. On this evening, therefore, contrary to her usual custom, she had but a couple of trot-

ting varlets about the side of her coach, instead of having six of them.

At the moment Sir John Fitz was on that part of the track across the Down which led directly into the wood of Holwell, there came by another track, near this very entrance, with such speed as was then held consistent with the state and dignity of a court lady, this rumbling and heavy vehicle, containing the person of Lady Howard. We should here notice, however, that the first intimation of its approach, even before the noise of the wheels announced it, was conveyed to John Fitz by the sight of a well-known bloodhound bounding by his horse, which he recognised as the constant attendant of Lady Howard, and to which she had given the significant name of Redfang.

Redfang was of that race of bloodhounds now almost extinct in England, but which at the period of our tale were to be found in the country residence of every nobleman, baron, or person of distinction throughout the kingdom.

Redfang was of a breed extraordinary even in these usual distinctions of his kind; and Lady Howard, proud of every distinction claimed by her house, would frequently speak of her favourite by the name of the *Redfang Howard*. He had limbs of a giant mould, his countenance was fierce and stern, with a dark spot above each eye, long black ears, and a heavy jaw; a grised back, and a body of a deep sand colour, almost approaching to red, completed the striking appearance of the noble hound, the favourite of his mistress and the terror of all deerstalkers, mendicants, and intruders upon the person or property of Lady Howard. Indeed, there were not wanting those who said that she thus constantly held the animal near her person for the purpose of keeping at bay all beggars and humble petitioners upon her purse; for, though costly in her dress, household or equipage, and affecting an ostentatious show of occasional hospitality, Lady Howard was said to be naturally of a close and penurious disposition; in fact, one of those women who would give pounds to fortune-tellers, witches, and agents like Betsy Grimal, but who would grudge a penny bestowed on a poor soul who begged it in the name of common charity.

When Redfang, therefore, bounded suddenly before the young and spirited horse of Sir John Fitz, the animal, which was but newly broken in, started; and Fitz, in his impatience and irritable state of mind, struck him several sharp cuts upon the side with his riding-wand. This made the horse restive; so that,

what with rearing, kicking, and plunging, the rumbling coach drove past Sir John Fitz at the very moment that, by spurring the horse till the blood and sweat ran down its sides, he had so far regained the mastery as to turn the high-spirited creature's head in the direction of the private path which led into the wood of Holwell.

Lady Howard, who knew both horse and rider the instant she had set her keen eyes upon them at some distance from the spot, was struck with surprise by the last-mentioned circumstance. She knew well, for she was on the most intimate terms of friendship with Sir Nicholas Slanning, that since his marriage nothing but ill-suppressed feelings of hatred and distrust subsisted between him and Fitz. She knew also that the latter had never been seen in company with any of the Slanning family since that ill-fated union. And now to find Sir John Fitz stealing, as it were, in the evening, by a private path to the house of Sir Nicholas, when the master of it was absent, with an uncertain date of return, and his wife living there alone in the most retired manner, was altogether such a circumstance as one of Lady Howard's temper, character, and exasperated feelings towards two of the persons concerned, could not let pass without some inquiry.

She now, therefore, opened one of those small square apertures designed for a window, and calling out to the first postillion of the left wheel-horse to stop, he iterated her commands to the second postillion of the leaders, accompanying them with a touch of the long whip by way of enforcing attention, and the moving house stood still. In another moment both the long-breathed trotting varlets were, one on each side, at the windows of the coach doors, ready to receive their lady's commands. She now intimated her design to drive up the grand avenue of Holwell, to call and inquire after the health of her dear friend Lady Slanning.

No sooner was this direction given, than the trotting varlet communicated the same to the left-wheel postillion, and again the master of the long whip saluted the ears of his companion with a gentle admonition to enforce his lady's orders, twitched the reins, and, giving an encouraging gee-up to his cattle, the obedient animals whisked their long tails and set off at a round trot that soon brought their load in front of the principal entrance to Holwell. Immediately one trotting varlet hastened to announce the arrival of his lady to the porter of the hall door,

and the other stood ready to hand his mistress down the stairs of her coach, so soon as that door should be opened.

Lady Howard, however, before the porter could answer to the summons, cast an inquisitive eye up to an apartment above, which she knew to be generally inhabited by Lady Slanning since the absence of her husband, and there she saw, either crossing the room, or suddenly retreating from the window, a certain waving plume, such as, but a quarter of an hour before, she had remarked in the black velvet hat worn by Sir John Fitz. It is surprising with what curious eyes some ladies observe minute articles of dress. Lady Howard felt assured that this plume was the identical one she had seen. Her impatience increased to such a degree that she was even on the point of stepping out of her coach to go into the house when William (the same trusty page who had borne the packet to Lidford) came to her ladyship's coach door and said, very civilly, "that his mistress, Lady Slanning, was both ill at ease in health, and particularly engaged on matters of business, and therefore could receive no one, for which he, William, was particularly sorry, as it obliged him to refuse the particular honour of the visit to his lady of so honourable a lady as Lady Howard."

If, reader, you have ever seen one little single spark drop on a heap of gunpowder, so as to produce an instantaneous and violent combustion of the whole mass, you may, it is possible, by comparison, form some idea of what was now the state of Lady Howard's mind. She had long stored and collected materials proper for the wildest explosion of rage and fury. It wanted but some such trifling circumstance as this to act as a brand to light up the whole train. With a passionate burst of offended pride, which she could not even conceal from the page who had so civilly dismissed her, she bade her trotting varlets close her coach door, and ordered the postillions instantly to drive off. But no sooner had the heavy vehicle cleared the avenue, and once more got upon the open Down, than she again issued orders that it should stop; and, careless of what her servants might choose to think of her conduct, she desired them to open the coach door.

She was obeyed, and immediately left her coach. She now bade them keep the horses in exercise, by driving gently up and down till her return, ordered her varlets not to follow her, and, calling aloud to Redfang, set off, accompanied only by that favoured and faithful attendant, towards the very path on which

John Fitz, but a little while before, had so violently spurred and gored his horse.

She now by signs and gestures, well understood by her hound, bade him lead her on ; and the dog, obedient to her commands, speedily conducted her to a knoll in the park near Holwell House, where she found, beneath the shelter of some large and spreading beech trees, Andrew Morton, quietly seated on an old bench, his own horse and that of his master tied up to one of the trees.

The dusk of evening fast gathered round. Lady Howard, therefore, who had no time to lose, immediately entered into conversation with Morton. What she learned from him may hereafter appear ; for the present we shall only add that, close as she was in general, she drew her purse strings before she left him to return to her coach ; and, as the purse came back to her pocket much lighter in weight, we conclude she did not give away her money for what she deemed of no consequence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,
And would conceive for what I gave the ring,
When naught would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

SHAKESPEARE.

WE must now return to Sir John Fitz, whom we left on his way through the wood to Holwell House. On his arrival he left the horses, as we have already stated, to the care of his servant, Andrew Morton ; and, going towards the house, he was instantly admitted by William, who forthwith conducted him to an apartment usually occupied by Lady Slanning. She was not there when Fitz entered the room, and he endeavoured, as well as the shortness of the interval allowed, to prepare his mind to meet her with some degree of composure. But the apartment in which he found himself was ill suited to the purpose, since, though Lady Slanning had removed to this house after her unfortunate marriage, many of the objects that now met his view he recog-

nised as old acquaintances—things he had seen a thousand times at Kilworthy in other days, and under circumstances how different from those in which he now stood !

It is surprising what an effect even inanimate objects have the power to produce on a mind compacted of fine sensibilities, and tremblingly alive to the slightest objects that can call them into action. Here hung her picture—the picture of Margaret, whom Fitz once thought his own. It was painted when she was but a girl of twelve years old ; yet even at that early period there was much of the animated character, of the peculiar sweetness of disposition, expressed in her countenance, which, at a more mature age, had rendered her so captivating, so endearing in the sight of him who would have preferred death to the loss of one so loved.

Here was her lute. How often had she touched its chords for Fitz ! There stood a well-remembered cabinet, that, in former days, he knew Margaret used to keep as the depository of all those letters, papers, and little treasures she most valued ; and, sickening sight ! there was an object that too well reminded him of what she was now to another, as at the lower end of the room hung the full-length portrait of Sir Nicholas Slanning. It represented him clad in armour, and leaning upon a drawn sword. The very picture seemed to look with an aspect of threatening superiority upon Fitz, as if it would say, “ I have the right, and I will maintain it.”

Sir John Fitz, after gazing a moment on the resemblance of his fortunate rival, with feelings of mingled resentment and indignation, turned aside his head, and in doing so his eyes encountered the beautiful form of Lady Slanning, who at this moment entered the room. Fitz remained motionless ; he did not even salute her in terms of common courtesy ; he could only bend his head upon his bosom, and sighed deeply, as some slight acknowledgment that he was conscious of her presence. The observance of ceremony is easy to the indifferent or to the careless mind, but with one overpowered by its own feelings it is forgotten.

Margaret advanced with an air of quiet composure ; yet, notwithstanding this, it was evident that her heart was less tranquil. Her lips had a tremulous motion, and her countenance was overspread with a deep blush, as she spoke in a low tone and confused manner some few words of whose import she was herself scarcely conscious. Sir John Fitz at length so far re-

covered as to ask her from what extraordinary cause she had summoned his attendance.

"The cause is extraordinary, indeed," said Lady Slanning; "but you surely remember——"

"Remember!" said John Fitz, dwelling as it were upon every syllable of the word—"Remember, Margaret! Oh, that I could forget——" and, as if anxious to suppress the feelings into which he had been thus surprised, he added, in a more cold and distant tone, "What would Lady Slanning have with me?"

"A brief conference," replied Margaret. "I know, I am aware, how strange this conduct must seem to you; yet, as I trust in that Power before whom my motive for seeking it stands revealed, so do I hope that when you shall truly know the cause you will pardon the unhappy being who is thus driven to seek you in the hour of her need."

"And what services can I render to Lady Slanning," said Fitz, "which Sir Nicholas, the man to whom she gave a husband's right to protect her, cannot render her far better than myself?—I was despised once, why am I sought now?"

"Do not speak thus," replied Lady Slanning; "your words are bitter and full of reproach. Why nourish such unkind thoughts of one who never wilfully injured you—I had hoped for a kinder reception of my request in the hour of my distress."

"And wherefore should you hope it?" said Fitz. "Can a bankrupt give gold? can an outcast give comfort? But what cause can exist that should make it necessary or decorous that I should be required to render my service and attendance to the wife of Sir Nicholas Slanning?"

"Sir Nicholas is absent from home," replied Margaret. "He is now in company with those gentlemen who have joined to put down this sudden insurrection in Cornwall; but were he here he could not now afford me relief; it is from you, from you alone, I can hope to receive it. I would speak on a matter of life or death."

"On a matter of life or death!" exclaimed Fitz; "what mean you, madam? Speak plainly; you surprise me; but your looks, your agitation, all show that some purpose of deep interest lies hidden in your words."

He paused a moment, and then added, "I would be generous to you. If I can contribute to your happiness no whispered thought of resentment shall interfere to make me cause you one

moment's sorrow—you may still command me, if in aught I can serve you."

"You can do all," said Margaret, eagerly; "you can save me from shame and misery; you have lost a father, let that teach your heart to feel for mine, since it is to save my father that I now plead to you."

"Your father!" cried Fitz; "you astonish me. I thought your father had long since died in a foreign land, and that you were an orphan before you became the ward of Glanville."

"I believed so too," said Lady Slanning; "yet you are aware there was always a mystery that hung about my birth—that is now revealed to me. Ask me no questions. I would implore you to inquire no more—my lips are bound to silence by such authority as may not be disobeyed. I dare tell you but this—your prisoner is my father."

"What! George Standwich!" exclaimed Fitz, "the leader of rebels, the agent of Rome and Spain, is he your father?"

"Ay," said Margaret; "that most unhappy man gave me life and being. Had I died at the hour of my birth it had been well—I had now been spared these moments of anguish and of shame."

"And in what manner can you hope that I may serve this man," said Fitz, "whose fate, as he is your father, I lament? He is a traitor, and offended justice demands his life as the forfeit of his crimes."

"I know all his danger," replied Margaret; "time presses. Sir Nicholas Slanning is absent; and even were he here he has no power to aid me in this emergency. The crisis of my father's fate draws near. I must act, or he must perish."

"He must perish, indeed, Margaret," said Fitz; "I will not deceive you with false hopes, nor keep from you the knowledge of that which in a few hours you will learn. The warrant for the death of George Standwich this day reached Lidford."

An expression of horror overspread the countenance of Lady Slanning at hearing these words. She clasped her hands together, and wrung them in the bitterness of her soul, as she exclaimed, "But you will not, you cannot have the heart to execute it?"

"I must," said Fitz. "I am bound by my honour, by my oath of office, to obey the commands of my sovereign and of the laws. Disobedience on my part would be an act of high treason."

"And must he die?" exclaimed Margaret, in accents that

were rendered shrill and piercing by the vivacity of her feelings ; "will you cut off this miserable man in the midst of sin and sorrow, nor leave him space to make his peace with God ? Can you thus shed the blood that gave me being ?"

"I must not hear you," said Fitz. "If I could save your father at the peril of my life only it would be but a small matter to risk a thing that is so worthless to me ; but my honour must not yield even to your entreaty. I beseech you urge me no more. Let go my cloak. Spare me, spare yourself this vain entreaty."

"I will not—I must not," replied Margaret. "I know my father has been guilty of many crimes ; but he is still my father, still the being who loves me better than life itself ; and I will never cease from my purpose, to attempt to save him, whilst life remains. You have been a son, you know what are the feelings of a child ; then think what must be mine should he die ! die by an ignominious fate, when there was one chance left to save him, would you but listen to me."

"What chance ?" said Fitz. "There is none, unless it were purchased by the forfeit of my honour ! That is all that is left to me, Margaret ; and surely you would not ask me to forfeit my last hope !"

"I do not, I will not," cried Lady Slanning ; "all I would ask you is, to suspend the execution of the warrant for his death."

"I dare not do it."

"You shall not say so," she continued ; "you dare do it—you will do it ;" and throwing herself on her knees before him, she added in an emphatic though hurried manner, "you will fly to the throne of Elizabeth ; you will kneel at her feet, as I now kneel at yours ; you will ask my father's life ; plead your own merits to cover his offences, and she will not refuse you ; and my father lives ! It was to ask this I now sought you."

Sir John Fitz raised her from the ground ; he hesitated, and seemed to struggle with his own feelings, in the endeavour to calm hers ; but still he said not a word that could convey hope to her mind. Margaret saw the conflict in his bosom, and bade him, in a calm voice, look upon the ring she had that day sent to him, and which he now wore upon his hand, and then to deny her if his own feelings would let him.

Sir John Fitz drew it from his finger, and for a moment held it in his hand, whilst Lady Slanning stood before him with a

countenance in which every lovely feature seemed to glow with the expressive animation that was so much the characteristic of her mind. Her hands remained clasped together, and her eye fixed itself on Fitz, as if eager to catch some indication of hope, that this last appeal to his feelings might avail.

The appearance of Fitz, as he gazed upon the ring, was in the highest degree striking and impressive; he was clad in deep mourning for his father—his hair hung dishevelled and neglected about his brows—the paleness of long and wasting care was still on his cheek, whilst the expression of his countenance, which, during the late scene, even in the midst of sorrow, had preserved some traces of offended pride, now lost all its haughty character. It was evident his feelings were greatly subdued and softened by this allusion to the ring; and a tear started to his eye as he said, in a voice deep and tremulous with emotion, "Could you, Margaret, so carefully preserve that token, and forget him who placed it on your hand?"

"I never did forget," replied Lady Slanning; but instantly added, as if recollecting herself, "I must not speak of the past."

"But this speaks of the past, Margaret," said Fitz, "and speaks volumes. How often have I thought upon the time when I placed that ring upon your hand; it was the last time I ever called Margaret mine. The remembrance has never left me; it has been the subject of my thoughts by day, it has chased slumber from my pillow by night."

"If remembrance can be thus painful to you," said Lady Slanning, "think what it must hereafter be to me should you refuse to save my father's life."

Fitz seemed scarcely to hear her words; the current of his feelings had changed, it now flowed on in an unrestrained course, whilst he continued to gaze upon the ring, and rather to give utterance to his own thoughts, than address them to Lady Slanning. "Could Margaret," said he, "wed another whilst this was on her hand?—Wherefore," he added distractedly, "wherefore is this now forced on my remembrance? Is it but to plant another dagger in that heart where there are already so many deep wounds?—Have you worn the ring?"

"When I received the token," replied Lady Slanning, "I made a solemn promise that, under any circumstances in which I might be placed in the fortunes of this world, that ring should never leave my hand till it was stiffened by the grasp of death.—I have kept my vow, and this day I call on you to keep yours."

Fitz raised his head, looked stedfastly upon Margaret—a slight convulsive movement seemed to pass over his features, his lips moved, but his tongue denied its office. He came up to Lady Slanning, took her hand with agitating emotion, drew the ring again upon her finger, and at length said in a low, but emphatic tone, "Margaret—you have prevailed."

"You will spare him then!" exclaimed Lady Slanning; "you will solicit his pardon from the Queen? You will save my father?"

"I will attempt to do it," said Fitz; "for your sake I will attempt it. I may not live for you; the laws of God and man forbid it. But I could die to serve you, and welcome would be the hour that so closed my unhappy fate. Farewell, I must leave you."

"And my father!" said Lady Slanning.

"I will think upon what must be done," replied Fitz; "for the present I take upon me, at my own peril, the suspension of the warrant for his death. I will devise the means to serve him farther, before I set out on my journey to the court. Standwich, I think, though an agent of treason, has never yet drawn the sword in open rebellion; that circumstance may be used in his favour, to obtain mercy."

"Thank heaven, it may," said Lady Slanning; "but what words shall speak my thanks—my gratitude—to the generous preserver of my father's life?"

"Give me none, I want none," cried Fitz; "I must instantly be gone. But remember, as you value the life of that father you would preserve, keep my purposes secret as the grave. Should they become known to Sir Nicholas Slanning, before I could reach the court to plead in person to the queen, all my efforts would be rendered unavailing. You shall hear from me again, ere I go to ask the mercy of Elizabeth."

Lady Slanning promised compliance with this request, and added, that there was no chance she should be tempted to break it, for, in consequence of the uncertainty attending the movement of the forces in pursuit of the rebels, Sir Nicholas had cautioned her to make to him no communication of any affair of importance, in her letters, during his absence, lest, failing to reach him, their contents might become known to strangers.

Sir John Fitz repeated his assurances, and quitting the presence of Margaret, he sought Andrew Morton, who held his horse, mounted, and rode slowly on for Fitz-ford, where he now purposed to pass the night, instead of returning to Lidford.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

How poor an instrument
May do a noble deed ! He brings me liberty.

SHAKESPEARE.

GEORGE STANDWICH, who lay in Lidford Castle under sentence of death, wholly ignorant that any attempt had been proposed for procuring his pardon, now gave himself up for lost ; and, with that strange mixture of violent and evil passions which was so natural to him, his bigotry and superstition, his tenderness for Margaret and anxiety for his associates, alternately swayed and tormented his mind as each successive feeling predominated in his bosom. Some days had now elapsed, and he had seen no one but the youth, who, under the direction of Andrew Morton, brought him such necessaries as it was needful he should receive to sustain the miserable existence he endured.

There were moments in which his zeal for the faith he professed, and his anxiety for its restoration in England, prevailed over every other thought ; yet such a mood was but momentary, as, in his more sober reflections, he felt convinced, from the circumstances which had lately transpired, that all attempts to subvert the rule of Elizabeth must be vain. Then he would turn his thoughts upon himself, and conscience would rise up to sting him with its venomous tooth. If he looked back to the days of his youth, his guilty intrigue with Lady Page, which had led that wretched woman to the murder of her husband, constantly stared him in the face. Then followed the remembrance of her own horrid death ; the concealment of Margaret's birth ; and though last, yet not least, of his self-reproaches, was the thought of the cruel deceit he had practised on his unfortunate daughter, in order to bring about her unhappy marriage.

He wished to see his daughter before he paid the forfeit of his crimes ; he wished to acknowledge to her the truth, and to ask her forgiveness ; but the total silence of Levi the Jew left him no hope. Enraged by repeated disappointment, and the festering wounds of his own mind, there were times when Standwich gave way to the natural fierceness, the resentful feelings, of his disposition ; and in one of these moods, the last time he had seen Morton, he threatened that wretch with telling

Fitz, before he died, of the treachery of which he had been guilty, whilst his master was a prisoner in the Low Countries. Andrew Morton, who was a cautious villain, made no reply to these threats at the time, but he had deeply pondered on the probability of a man like Standwich putting them into execution ; and he had made up his mind, in consequence, how to act towards the prisoner.

Whilst Standwich was occupied in one of these fits of deep musing in his dungeon, he was suddenly surprised by the presence of Levi the Jew, who entered his cell alone, and, with every mark of anxiety upon his countenance, cast a hurried glance around. His first action was carefully to close the trap-door through which he had descended ; his second was to take down the lamp which, as we before stated, was here kept burning by day and night, since, but for this lamp, the condemned cell would have been in total darkness.

As Levi took down the lamp, with the greatest care, from the hook by which it was suspended on the chain, and began to trim it, and to feed it with oil from a little flask that he produced, Standwich, surprised by this action, by the manner of the Jew, and yet more by his silence, asked him, "for what was all this preparation ? and why the boy who usually brought him food, and trimmed the lamp, could not now do it as well as he ?"

"Because," answered Levi, "he will not have the like motive that I have to do it with care."

"There is darkness in your speech," said Standwich. "For what purpose do you come ? Have you done my errand to my daughter ?"

Levi moved not from the spot, nor took the least heed of Standwich's question, till he had finished with the utmost care the task of trimming the lamp. He then set it down in a corner of the dungeon ; and, with marks of anxiety strongly imprinted upon his countenance, came up to the prisoner, and said in a low voice, "Up, George Standwich ! Arise, lose not a moment, for the God of Israel hath sent thee a deliverer."

"What mean you ?" said Standwich. "This is no time for trifling."

"I am no trifler," replied Levi : "nor is this a place for vain devices, when thy enemies lay in wait for thee with a mighty hand to crush thee. I bring you much news."

"News !" said Standwich ; "have you brought me any intelligence from my child ?"

"I have not," replied the Jew. "I gave the sealed letter into her own hand, but more I dared not do. It is not of her I would speak. The boy Benjamin——"

"What of him?" said Standwich impatiently; "what is he to me?"

"The lad is a good lad," answered Levi; "and he is much to thee; but for the tidings he hath brought me, trust me, George Standwich, thou wert even at this hour as one that is numbered among the dead."

"I cannot read riddles," said Standwich, sullenly; "speak at once; I am in no good mood for fooling."

"The counsel of the heart is made known by the lips," replied the Jew; "and all things may not be told in one breath. The lad Benjamin, who journeyed on mine own ass, and on mine own occasions, returned but this morning from Launceston, where he saw a sight such as made his bones to shake as the hair of his flesh stood up."

"What sight? Did it concern my friends who have beleagured the castle, that you should now speak of it?" cried Standwich impetuously.

"Ay, marry did it," said Levi. "Thy friends are discomfited; some have fallen by the sword, others are in bondage; the teeth of the young lions are broken, and the old lion perisheth for lack of help: for the sight which made sick the heart of little Benjamin was the hanging, drawing, and quartering of thine ancient friend and ally, Cuthbert Mayne, whose head was set upon the walls of Launceston Castle."

"Has he failed? Has Cuthbert fallen in our brave cause? Then why should I be spared? Cuthbert Mayne counselled the enterprise by which so many gallant spirits, as well as his own, have bit the dust."

"Trust me," said the Jew, "thou hast no cause to sorrow for him; for his counsel was to thee like the counsel of Ahithophel who made Absalom to sin. Think of thyself; for Benjamin further saith—that it was publicly talked amongst the captains, whilst he waited upon one of them in the way of simple traffic, that the warrant for thy death had been sent down from the council some days past; and that if Sir John Fitz delayed to execute it they would seek him out to know the cause of such delay, since Cuthbert Mayne made it his boast under the gallows-tree that George Standwich would one day avenge his death. These words of Cuthbert were told to Sir Nicholas Slanning

and the captains of the hosts, so little Benjamin informed me; and he adds, they were as eager for thy death as if they had made a covenant of salt upon it. And hither will they come this day, to know the cause why the warrant is delayed in its execution."

"Let them come," said Standwich; "I am prepared. There is but one wish I have now on earth; it is the desire I feel to see my daughter; but it is in vain. I will arm myself, therefore, to meet death bravely, as a man should meet it."

"Rather arm thyself to avoid it, Standwich," said the Jew, "as a wise man would do when the gate lies open to thee by which thy soul shall escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. Here," continued Levi, throwing off the large mantle in which he had been closely wrapped when he had entered the dungeon, "Here are the means of deliverance, if thou hast heart and hand to embrace them. Arise, I will cut through thy bonds."

George Standwich again inquired the meaning of these words; but Levi only answered him by producing a small file, with which, in the most dexterous manner, he speedily cut through the ankle-fetters of Standwich that confined him to the chains.

"Now walk forth," said the Jew. "Stretch thy limbs. Thou art free, and strong as a giant to run his course."

"I am free of these iron shackles," replied Standwich, "but what may that avail, whilst I am here within walls that lie buried beneath the ground? What matters it if the fox lie safe within his burrow if he dare not venture forth lest the dogs fly at his throat?"

"The dogs shall be at thy heels rather," said Levi, "but not at thy throat, if this can keep them at bay," and he drew forth a pair of pistols, and gave them to Standwich as he spoke.

"Take up the cloak," continued Levi, "wrap it around thee; I have but one other thing to do, and then, George Standwich, thou shalt follow me."

"What to do?" said Standwich. "Tell me, that I may be prepared to meet all chances. I believe you have some plan to save me; hasten then to communicate it."

"Not yet," replied Levi, who seemed determined, even though he had in the first instance expressed impatience to depart, to execute his plan in the cool and regular order of its course. "Yet thus much I will tell thee. Sir John Fitz departed from Lidford not more than an hour ago; and I have learnt, that

at dawn to-morrow he quits Fitz-ford to begin a secret journey, the purpose of which he keeps so hidden that not even Andrew Morton knows it. I have used means to buy that varlet's services in thy behalf, and he has shown me a way to deliver thee, bidding me not to delay to use it whilst he is absent this night in attendance upon his master at Fitz-ford; for Morton does not ride with him on the journey, and unless your escape is made good whilst he is away, so that he may incur no blame, he would not venture to aid it even for gold."

"I would wager my life," said Standwich, "that Betsy Grimal has devised this plan to secure my retreat from danger. She has long worked in concert with Andrew Morton to betray Sir John Fitz, and to serve me."

"She hath no hand in it," replied Levi. "She knows nothing of these devices. Morton would no longer trust that woman of Belial, since she has leagued herself with Lady Howard, in whose service, it is said, she is now constantly at work."

"It must be for evil, then," said Standwich. "And, when two such unite to do the work of darkness, Morton did well no longer to trust one of them, though Betsy Grimal has been at all times faithful to me."

"So thought Sisera," said Levi, "when he fled before Barak, and did put his trust in Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; but her faith was found in a hammer and a nail, and so Sisera died. No, Captain Standwich, we trust no Jael in our need. I alone undertook thy delivery, and Morton gave his soul to my purpose as I gave him the gold. You saved me from the bitterness of death in times past, when I fled before a wild beast of the forest; and, as truly as there is a God in Israel, I will requite that good deed at the risk of all that I may call mine, though, by so doing, I leave myself not a groat to help to the building up the temple of Zion."

"Stay, Levi," said Standwich to the Jew, who had now taken up the lamp, and seemed about to lead the way out of the dungeon; "stay, Levi, I cannot thus be outdone in generosity, and that by an unbeliever, by one who is held accursed of God and man. I will not go with you; for well I know that to deliver George Standwich must be at the peril of the life of him who shall dare to do it. Leave me to my fate. Go, old man—go in safety; I will not be the cause of danger to thee and thine."

"There is no danger to me or mine," replied Levi, "unless it be the consequence of thy own folly. The boy who brought thee

food in this dungeon is purposely sent out of the way. Andrew Morton, the keeper of thy dungeon, himself let me into the tower before he departed with his master to Fitz-ford. The means for thy escape are such, that they shall seem to be the result of thy own superior knowledge of the place, and solely of thy own devising. In less than eight hours thou wilt be beyond the reach of thy enemies; for the "Swallow," ready to sail, waits but to receive thee on board, and the pirate, Captain Noseworthy, whose trade fails, and who gets but small prizes on this coast, goes for the New World, there to try new fortunes. He rejoices to think thou wilt join him, knowing how useful a man of thy mettle may become to him."

"I am ready, then," said Standwich; "but how shall we pass the watch, or the gates of the castle?"

"Tush, tush," answered Levi, "thinkest thou we could pass them? Muffle yourself in the cloak; place the pistols in your girdle; step lightly, and follow me. I will take the lamp."

Levi led the way with much caution, and both himself and Standwich soon reached the small apartment immediately above the dungeon; no one was there. The door of this chamber had been carefully locked and bolted on the outside by Andrew Morton, the better to cover his share in the escape of George Standwich, a dangerous and incomprehensible piece of service, unless it be remembered that Standwich had more than once threatened Morton that, before he died on the scaffold, he would reveal to Sir John Fitz the share Morton had formerly taken in betraying his letters. It is probable, therefore, this wretch hoped to silence Standwich by conniving at his escape.

When Levi and his companion had reached the apartment above, the Jew said softly, "Here our perils end; we are now at liberty."

"At liberty!" cried Standwich, "why, yonder door is of iron, and immovably secured."

"Ay," said Levi, "but I will disclose to you a secret. Dost thou mark yonder large square grey stone in the wall?"

"I do," said Standwich, "the stone that has the iron loop in it, you mean."

"That is a secret spring," said Levi, "and I have learned the trick of it. Andrew Morton knows well the old tower. His father was warder here for thirty years, and once saved his own life by his knowledge of this very secret. Hold the lamp; stand farther back, lest the current of air should extinguish

it. Look now! it is a marble like that of the hard rock of Horeb which spouted water for a thirsty people."

Levi touched the spring as he spoke, and instantly a slight opening in the stone was perceived in that part where it had appeared to be joined to other stones. It stood like a door ajar supported by its hinges.

"This is the entrance to the subterranean vault,"* said Levi. "It leads to the aperture in the rocks near the gulf of Lidford Bridge."

"Go on," said Standwich, "I would venture did it lead to Hell's confines."

"Flee for thy life, then," cried Levi. "But be as Lot was when he fled. Neither stop thou in all the plain, but flee to the mountains lest thou be consumed, for those shall seek thee who will thirst for thy blood, even as a hart desireth the water-brooks. I will bear the lamp, for if that goes out we are both lost."

So saying, Levi was the first to tread the subterranean steps; Standwich followed. The descent was carried for some distance by a winding stair built within the vast thickness of walls. These steps led down to the very foundation of the building, where the long, low, and narrow passage commenced. It was cut through a hard and rocky soil, here and there over-arched with masonry. The date of its construction was unknown, and was probably as early as that of the first rude structure which stood on the same site before the building of the present ancient castle. Time had rendered the cement of this archway as hard as the very rock out of which it was in part cut, and the whole had been so well formed that it was still entire, scarcely a stone was loosened from its bed.

Levi, who shaded the lamp with his hand so as to guard the flame from any sudden gust of wind, proceeded along the passage with much caution; and, so intent was he upon safely overcoming this part of the difficulty of the way, that he scarcely spoke to Standwich till a freer current of air, and a faint glimmering of blue light that appeared in the distance, after a sudden turn in the steep descent of the passage, assured him they had now passed all danger to be apprehended from darkness, and drew near the outlet of the cavern.

Soon after they heard a low murmuring sound, which increased as they advanced, till the plashing and at length the roar of

* Though this entrance to the subterranean cavern at Lidford no longer exists, the tradition of it and of the cavern is still current.

water was distinctly audible, giving them the assurance that they were drawing near the bed of the river Lid. In a little time the descent of the passage became more abrupt, and at length they reached its termination. The mouth of the cavern, if viewed from without, could scarcely have been distinguished from the numerous fissures by which it was surrounded. It was formed by a natural opening or cleft in the solid rock, whose sides, black as ebony, exhibited a thousand grotesque shapes, against which the foam of the Lid, whenever the river was swollen by rains, dashed and broke in white flakes like snow, and roaring and striving in its rapid course burst over every huge mass which here intercepted the passage, and lay just as they had fallen when wrenched from the sides of the deep gulf, at the moment it was reft by volcanic explosion.

Above, as if threatening every instant to dislodge themselves from their hold, hung masses of rock, half suspended in air, so that it seemed as if the slightest shock would bring them down. Brambles, moss, the wild fern, with the trunks of many an antiquated tree, grew thick in the interstices.

After crossing the rocks that strewed the middle of the Lid, with some difficulty, for the sides of the gulf were washed by the river itself, and afforded no footing, George Standwich once more reached the dry firm earth, and remained concealed amid the thick entangled woods of Lidford ravine for many hours, where the provident Levi, who came prepared to supply his necessities, refreshed him with some scanty food and a small flask of wine.

At length the hour approached when Benjamin was to guide some horses, as appointed, to the summit of the hill above the glen. George Standwich and Levi arose to meet him, and hailed with joy the sight of the little Jew, who led two horses, one of which appeared to be equipped for a double rider. In a few minutes Standwich was on the back of one. Levi mounted the other, and Benjamin sat behind him, perched upon a high pillion. For the present we leave them, to pursue their way, whilst we turn to other matters that now demand our attention.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

My heart is ready to crack with impatience—
Who says this is improvident jealousy? My wife
Hath sent to him, the hour is fixed, the match
Is made. Would any man have thought this?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE house inhabited by Lady Howard, of which at the present time not a vestige remains, stood at no great distance from Holwell, the residence of Sir Nicholas Slanning. It was both externally and internally a place of the utmost magnificence, displaying all the wealth and splendour of its costly owner.

Towards the close of the memorable day on which Standwich had escaped from Lidford, and which Sir John Fitz designed should be the last of his resting at Fitz-ford before he commenced his journey to London, the evening set in with a heavy and gloomy aspect, accompanied by great heat and sullen clouds, which indicated an impending storm. In order, perhaps, to avoid this, or from some other motive, a single horseman, wrapped in the large riding-cloak then so universally worn, with his hat slouched over his face, and with every appearance of having ridden hard, was seen to cross Whitchurch Down, and never to slacken his pace till he arrived at the door of Lady Howard.

There he dismounted, and with some impatience of manner demanded an instant audience of the mistress of the mansion. The wondering domestic, as the horseman refused to tell either his name or business, was particularly anxious to gain a sight of the countenance shaded by the slouched hat. But the dusk of the evening, as well as the obvious intention of the stranger to conceal his person, effectually baffled curiosity; and, as Lady Howard desired he should be admitted to her presence, there was nothing more to be done but to conduct him thither.

On entering the apartment, not a word was spoken till the door was closed; when the stranger stepped up to the table, before which Lady Howard had been seated, and casting his hat down upon it, said, in a voice full of emotion, "I am come, madam. There is your own letter, which summoned me at this hour, and to this place. Prove the truth of what that letter asserts, and you shall not find me wanting in what is due to

myself as a husband—as a man ; yet I will do nothing rashly. I demand the proof, the clear undeniable proof,” he added, in a raised tone of voice, that showed no very courteous feeling towards Lady Howard herself.

This tone and manner were probably highly offensive, as she replied with even more than her accustomed haughtiness, “Demand it of your wife, then, Sir Nicholas ; bid her give you the clear undeniable proof ; for, if you seek it of me, you seek more than even a court of justice would demand ; since, in these cases, proofs are but inferred, and that from circumstances. But the husband, perhaps, of Lady Slanning, may have influence enough with his wife, to obtain from her a more minute account than I can give of her renewed intercourse with Sir John Fitz—that is, if he ask it patiently.”

The cold, sarcastic manner in which these words were spoken stung Slanning to the quick ; and, losing that command of his temper, which in some measure was habitual to him, he said, “I am not here, Lady Howard, to be taunted with insults by you. You have dared to accuse my wife—ay, my wife, in this letter, with a heavy crime ! You have caused me to come hither in private, on the assertion that you could give me proofs of her guilt ; and these proofs, therefore, I now demand.”

“Be patient then, Sir Nicholas,” replied Lady Howard, in a less haughty tone, “and you shall have proofs ; proofs, such as will make your heart sicken. But why thus begin your inquiry in a manner as if you questioned my honour ? What motive but that of a desire of justice, of friendship to you, of regard for your good name, could thus induce me to interfere in a matter full of danger, and in nothing likely to prove agreeable to my feelings.”

“Forgive me,” said Sir Nicholas ; “forgive, Lady Howard, the jealous inquiry of a miserable man ; who, rather than find this thing true, would wish to find falsehood in all the world besides. I did think, pardon me, I did hope, that some angry feelings of your own towards Sir John Fitz, as his unthankful return of your regard is publicly noised abroad, might have caused you to suspect more than really may be truth. But for this cause I would, in the first instance, have sought my wife, not you, and at this hour have forced from her a full confession of her falsehood.”

“And do you think,” said Lady Howard, “that a woman, who could act falsely to her husband, would be thus easily

brought to witness against herself? No, Sir Nicholas, believe me, women who dare deceive, dare all to cover their deception. If she is guilty, she will never speak the truth."

"It is so indeed," said Sir Nicholas; "if she could deceive me once she will deceive me still. You teach me how I ought to act; I will instantly seek Fitz; my sword's point shall force confession from his lips."

"That were but folly still," replied Lady Howard; "he will swear to you that you are deceived, drunk with the madness of your own passion; he will bid you go home, and sleep till your senses become sobered, whilst your wife, in all duty, smooths down the pillow which jealousy has rendered somewhat uneasy to your head. Be composed; hear me. Let your own eyes give you the proof you desire, and then act as you will. You have yet learned nothing to sanction these wild thoughts. Examine calmly what I can reveal; then what you do will find its support in reason."

"I will—it shall be so," said Slanning; "I will examine every circumstance; not the least, not that which could turn the scale of justice by a hair's weight, shall escape me; and if there be a doubt, but a doubt, it shall rest in the balance of mercy; for though I will have vengeance for my wrongs, yet those wrongs shall be manifest; they shall stare me in the face clear as the sun at noon-day before I think her guilty. I am calm now, quite calm; speak, how knew you of this matter?"

"I saw Sir John Fitz," replied Lady Howard, "but the very night before I wrote to you, riding privately through the wood to your house. I thought it strange that he should seek Lady Slanning at all; but yet more so that he should seek her in your absence; perhaps some renewed intercourse between you may account for this circumstance?"

"There has been no intercourse between us," said Sir Nicholas. "From the hour in which Fitz broke in upon us, but a few days after our marriage, he has avoided my presence, and, as I thought, that of my wife. What farther proof? for this, I as yet hold as nothing."

"It is nothing in itself," said Lady Howard; "nothing if it stood alone; since, however strange it might appear, the circumstance, it is possible, might be accounted for."

"It shall be accounted for," exclaimed Slanning vehemently; "not a circumstance shall pass that has been deemed of sufficient weight to impeach the fair fame of my wife, but all the world

shall know the clearness of her motive. Go on; I judge of nothing yet."

"I was in my coach," said Lady Howard, "and curious, I own it, to see how such a visitant as Sir John Fitz would be received, after having been successfully rivalled in the affections of the Lady Margaret by you. Whilst therefore he entered her house at a private door I drove round to the front. I saw Sir John Fitz suddenly retreat from the window above in your wife's apartment, as if to avoid observation, and——"

"You saw nothing more," exclaimed Slanning; "nothing that could impeach the honour of my wife?"

"Nothing," answered Lady Howard; "but as I was denied admission on the plea that the Lady Slanning was sick, ay, and engaged to boot, I could not but think my presence would have been somewhat embarrassing on the privacy of Sir John Fitz in his visit to your wife."

Slanning appeared greatly agitated. Lady Howard continued—"Yet as I know, by the courier who brought tidings from you to your wife, that he bore back a letter to you, there is no doubt but Lady Slanning must have fully explained a circumstance that appeared so extraordinary to me."

"She did not," exclaimed Sir Nicholas; "so help me heaven! she did not—she never named it. She wrote me such a letter as I never before received from her. I thought it strange; there was confusion in every line; scarcely a sentence intelligible; but they are plain now; this very confusion speaks the truth. Each page was written in words clear as light to show her infamy; yet I will know all. Go on, never fear; I will not flinch from the recital; I will hear all, and that calmly."

Sir Nicholas Slanning threw himself into a chair, whilst his cold-hearted and malicious tormentor continued her account, carefully adhering to truth; yet by voice, eye, manner, and gesture, giving such a malignant meaning to every sentence that it implied ten times more mischief than what she really spoke. Her words struck daggers to the heart of Slanning, and worked him up to such a pitch of jealousy that his state of feeling became intolerable.

"Dismissed from the house," continued Lady Howard, "I own to you that I felt some suspicions arise in my mind. I thought, had the meeting been an honest one, there needed no private way to admit Sir John Fitz; I followed up the inquiry; for my own satisfaction I did it as well as for yours."

"And why did you so?" said Slanning. "Surely my wife might, by some extraordinary circumstance, have held an interview, even in my absence, with Sir John Fitz—a man of an honourable name."

"She might so, indeed, I grant it," replied Lady Howard; "it is therefore the greater pity that the object of that meeting should have been such as she did not think proper to reveal to you."

The peculiar tone, the insidious meaning these words were calculated to convey, struck even Slanning. He saw there was deadly malice in the communication now made to him by Lady Howard, and he started from his seat as he said, "Beware—beware; think what you do—think before you pour into the heart of a fond husband suspicions that will turn its best affections into feelings fit for hell to kindle, and fiends to act. Look at the gulf before you! If you accuse, on circumstances of light suspicion, an honourable wife, you sink your own soul in guilt below the reach of hope. There remains no peace to you in earth or heaven. You blast an innocent fame; you accuse also Sir John Fitz—a man who has already sustained too much of injury at my hand; you now place arms in it afresh against him; you drive me to jealousy, to madness, perhaps to murder; you do this if you now dare to speak the words of malice, and not those of truth."

"As I shall be judged hereafter," said Lady Howard, "I have this night uttered not a syllable but truth. If you are deceived by my words, I am also deceived by my own eyes, by my own ears. Andrew Morton, Sir John Fitz's servant, assured me he was bid to hold his master's horse in the wood so as to avoid observation, whilst Sir John was with Lady Slanning. He also confessed—but I fear to tell you."

"Fear nothing—speak it; I will know all," cried Slanning, in a voice scarcely articulate with passion.

"He confessed," continued Lady Howard, "that Lady Margaret had that very afternoon sent her page to Lidford Castle with a letter to his master, and, as he thought, a token too; since, after the page was gone, he saw, on the hand of Sir John Fitz, a turquoise ring, set with diamonds, that he had never before seen him wear."

"I know it," exclaimed Slanning; "I know the ring well. Margaret constantly wore it—it was on her hand the very day of

our fatal marriage—I know she dearly prized that ring. What followed ? ”

“ Andrew Morton,” said Lady Howard, “ declares that his master answered the letter, sent it back by the page, and then followed himself; yet he was at a loss to guess for what purpose.”

“ For what purpose ! ” exclaimed Slanning, interrupting her; “ to do the work of hell !—to give himself, and my infamous wife, body and soul, to destruction ! I will finish it; for the work is but yet begun. What more ? Speak ! Let me have all the catalogue. Each word merits death.”

“ You are beside yourself,” said Lady Howard. “ If these things can stir you, how will you feel when I tell you that this night—ay, this very night, that comes upon us in storms and darkness—they meet again ! ”

“ Who meet again ? ” cried Slanning, wildly, as he stood, with the look of one half frantic from the irritation of his own dreadful feelings, his lips quivering, his cheeks pale, and his eye kindling with fire at every word that was uttered by Lady Howard. “ Who meet, did I ask ? ” he continued; “ my wife and her paramour !—They meet, do they ? Why I will meet them too !—an unwelcome guest, may be. O Margaret ! could I—could I have believed this to be possible ? ”

“ I will let fall the curtain,” said Lady Howard. “ How it lightens ! Hark !—Surely that was distant thunder ! ”

“ Do not,” said Slanning. “ Let the lightning play upon me.—Oh, that it would strike me dead ! There would be mercy in the stroke. Margaret, whom I thought so good, and now to find her false ; false to a husband who loved as I loved. I could waste my just wrath in tears of sorrow, so it could but wash out the foul, foul stain that blots her name. And she was fair too ; and now to find this flower, so young, so delicate and tender, to find it but a vile weed, worthy only to be cast down and trampled under foot. Yet my heart sinks within me when I think what I must do. Oh, that I could forget it in the tomb ! ”

“ Nay, come from the window,” said Lady Howard. “ How awful was that peal ! ”

She paused, as a loud peal of thunder, that seemed to burst immediately over the house, and to shake it to its very foundation, for an instant alarmed even the bold and hardened breast of Lady Howard. Both were silent ; and for a moment she for-

bore to advance to the window, as the storm raged without in unmitigated fury.

"This will be an awful night," said Lady Howard, "if the tempest continues, which it is like to do, for the sun is now set."

"It is the voice of God," said Slanning, "who speaks his commands to men in those elements of his wrath. His consuming fire is abroad, and here will it fall to-night. The hour of eight you tell me is appointed by Sir John Fitz for his visit to my wife."

"So his servant, Andrew Morton, says," replied Lady Howard; "and he adds, that his master quits this neighbourhood to-morrow, at dawn of day, to commence some secret journey; but who bears him company, or where, or for what purpose he goes, Morton cannot tell, so close has his master kept that a secret."

"Ha!" exclaimed Slanning; "how all things conspire to prove him guilty, and to flash conviction on my mind. I can read all the catalogue of crime prepared to have been acted this night. As I hastened hither, I passed near Lidford, and learnt, on my way, it had just been discovered by one of the guard at the castle that George Standwich was escaped. Amongst the officers who subdued that rebel, Cuthbert Mayne, it had already been a matter of complaint that Sir John Fitz delayed to execute the warrant for the death of Standwich. This delay, the absence of Fitz from Lidford at a time of so much peril, thus closely followed by the escape of Standwich, gave birth in my mind to strong suspicions that Fitz, for some great cause, had favoured his escape. Now I see it all; this villain regained liberty but to-day; Fitz meets Margaret to-night, and by dawn he leaves the country, perhaps, to bear off with him my wife; and no doubt Standwich is spared to help in this infamous deed, for the arm of a ruffian may be needful."

"There is cause indeed for suspicion," said Lady Howard; "yet I would beseech you to beware how you act, and not to judge too hardly. You have charged me with malice; and I can reply to it by taxing you, and truly, with the madness of unbridled passion. You shall hear me, if I now urge somewhat to mitigate your wrath."

"Speak it," said Slanning; "find but a shadow of excuse—show me but the least gleam of hope that I may think her innocent, and the gratitude of a broken-hearted man, whom you have saved from ruin, shall be yours to the latest moment of his life."

"Think," said the artful Lady Howard, "for how many years Sir John Fitz and Margaret loved with true affection. Could the marriage bond with you at once dissolve the affectionate union of years, when hearts were one?"

"You do well to remind me," said Slanning, in a bitter tone, that spoke the agony of his mind, "that I was never loved by my wife. This is past bearing; you urge this upon my remembrance to drive me to distraction. But I would rather hear a devil curse than pray; it is more honest. Off then with this mask; confess, Lady Howard, you have been slighted by Sir John Fitz; and that by his own guilty connection with my wife he has laid himself open to your revenge, and me you would make the instrument. Be it so, I am ready. My wrongs are greater than yours, and I will avenge us both."

"What if you have spoken truth," exclaimed Lady Howard, resuming the imperious tone so natural to her; "is their guilt the less because I feel an interest in its chastisement? No; I rejoice that it is I who have removed the veil cast before your sight to deceive you. It is I who show them both to you as they are, so that you may know them for what they are. Surely this is doing you good service."

"Yes," said Slanning, "such service as the executioner does his victim when he chooses a sharp axe, that one stroke may do his work without needing to repeat it. O woman! you who have dragged me on to this abyss; you who have raised in my soul those stings of jealousy, such as the bad are doomed to suffer when they look on the heaven from which they are shut out; you have a hardened, cruel heart."

As Sir Nicholas Slanning spoke these words he walked several times up and down the apartment in extreme agitation, examined his sword, drew the belt tighter, adjusted his cloak, passed his hand across his forehead, and at length stopped, facing a large timepiece that stood on a richly-carved cabinet at the lower end of the room.

"You mark the hour," said Lady Howard.

"I do," replied Slanning; "when the hour of eight strikes, my fate and his will be determined."

"I will go with you," said Lady Howard, "or in the frenzy of your passion there will be murder."

"And if there should," cried Slanning, "who will have set it on?"

"Those who are the guilty cause," replied Lady Howard.

"This is a foul night to stir abroad. Stay for me ; I will but fetch my mantle and join you. I have set a woman who may be trusted to watch near Holwell ; she will truly inform me of who-soever passes into your house this night."

"A woman !" said Slanning, with surprise.

"Ay, a woman," replied Lady Howard ; "she brings me word of what it may much concern you to know ; I go to fetch my mantle."

Lady Howard quitted the apartment ; and ere she re-entered it Betsy Grimal, who had been stationed to watch near the entrance of the wood that led by the private road to Holwell, came to inform her that a man had ridden hastily up the avenue on horseback ; she had seen him enter Lady Slanning's house ; there was no doubt the man was Sir John Fitz, though the rapidity of his pace, and the dusk of the evening, prevented her from seeing his features.

Assured that her victim was now safely lodged, Lady Howard lost not a moment in returning to the jealous husband of the unhappy Margaret, and communicated to him the intelligence she had just received from her dependant.

Sir Nicholas Slanning listened with attention. "The fox is earthed then," he said with a bitter smile ; "I will unkennel him." He instantly took up his hat, and prepared to leave the chamber ; but ere he did so, he turned suddenly to Lady Howard, laid his hand upon her arm, gazed upon her with a countenance to which the fell purpose of his mind had given an expression at once ghastly and terrific, and said, in a stern voice, "I go to be satisfied ; but if you have deceived me, the work of this night shall become fearful even to you ; nay, come on, you *shall* go with me. It is you, madam, who have brought this infamy to light, and you shall witness to it, face to face."

"I will do so," replied Lady Howard ; "but I stir not without my guard. Here Redfang ! Redfang !" she called aloud, and the hound instantly came at her summons. "Now I am ready," she continued ; "lead on ; dismiss this frantic mood ; be a man ; your passion masters your reason. I forgive your doubts of me ; for your own eyes will soon witness the proof ; John Fitz is even now at Holwell ; whilst you linger here he is in her sight."

"Let him look his last then," said Slanning ; "for if he be guilty, his blood be upon his own head !"

In this distracted state he led the way to Holwell, at one

moment doubtful of Lady Howard, whose malignity he saw but too well ; at another, feeling assured she would never thus dare to bear him company without she was certain he would detect his wife's guilt. Pondering on his evil fortune, his love for his wife, and her supposed falsehood, with his heart burning within him, and his veins fevered by the heated current of his blood ; in this dreadful condition did the unfortunate and enraged husband, accompanied by Lady Howard, and followed by her hound, set off in the midst of a lowering and stormy evening, to seek that home which, to him, was never more destined to be a home of peace.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Thou think'st 'tis much, that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin : so 'tis to thee ;
But where the greater malady is fixed,
The lesser is scarce felt.

O sir ! to wilful men,
The injuries, that they themselves procure,
Must be their schoolmasters.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE must now return to another set of the characters that help to make up the busy drama we have attempted to lay before our reader. By the time Standwich and Levi had quitted the sheltering woods of Lidford, under whose shade they had mounted their horses and set forward on their journey, the evening began to draw on apace, with an aspect that was threatening. As the sun sunk below dark and gathering clouds, the wind, which had hitherto slept in the most profound stillness, suddenly arose in strong and steady gusts ; whilst the increasing blackness around, and the clouds that sailed against the wind, indicated a thunder-storm to be near at hand.

"Push on, Levi," said Standwich to his companion, "or you will scarcely escape these threatening clouds. How far do you go with me?"

"Truly," answered the Jew, "till you reach the boat that waits for you, since I must take back the horses : that which you ride I have hired at some cost. I am answerable for the

beast to its owner, and, should it not be returned this night, some suspicions might arise ; but I have another piece of service to render you before we reach the other side of yonder Down that lies before us."

"What is that?" inquired Standwich.

"You will know anon," replied Levi. "I have concerted a signal, which shall indicate to Captain Noseworthy that you are free, so that he may bring the boat round to the appointed place to meet you. I have thought on every means to secure your escape ; and so may the God of Jacob prosper me and mine as I hope they will not fail you. Look out ; seest thou yonder huge rock, which rises in the midst of the plain like to Ararat or Carmel ? It is there we must fire the pile that shall be as the signal of hope to thy enterprise."

The fugitives now had reached an open, extensive, and elevated plain, in the midst of which was seen, towering abruptly to a vast height, a conical mass of rocks, in part covered with verdure ; on the very summit of which, and within a few feet of a precipitous declivity, stood a small church dedicated to St. Michael. A structure so remarkably situated was not without its legend.

The church, it was said, had been originally built at the base of this rock ; but the devil, being "prince of the powers of the air," had himself every night removed the work done by the labourers in the day, and placed the stones of it on the very summit of the Tor, in order to have the edifice within the scope of his own dominions. But no sooner was the church dedicated to St. Michael, than the patron saint beat him out, by hurling after him an enormous piece of the rock, which lies to this day a fragment at its base. A more probable legend, however, ascribed its erection to the fulfilment of a pious vow made by a mariner in the hour of his distress, who promised to build a church to St. Michael on the first land that might be descried by his vessel, should the saint preserve him from the peril of shipwreck in a storm.

Brent Tor, or the Burnt Tor, which, as its name indicates, from its vast elevation, had probably been used as a beacon station even by the aboriginal inhabitants of Britain, was the first point descried ; and here the pious mariner fulfilled his vow, and gave a church to St. Michael, and a landmark to all his succeeding brother mariners. For such it remains to this day, and still rears its old weather-beaten walls, though exposed for

centuries to a perpetual war of winds and tempests, and frequently enveloped in the clouds and mountain mists, which here discharge themselves after accumulating their burthen of vapours from the wide expanse of the Atlantic ocean and become the source of that humidity to which the counties of Devon and Cornwall are so constantly exposed.

As the travellers drew near Brent Tor, the dense clouds that lowered above its rocky head became black as night, and spreading themselves like a sable curtain into vast folds, obscured every object in the distance, and the desolation of the plain before them assumed an aspect yet more dreary, as its brown and purple tints changed to a deeper and a darker hue. The low mutterings of distant thunder now announced that the elemental strife was begun, whilst several flashes of lightning, that followed close on each other, for a moment dispelled the thick darkness, and the summit of Brent Tor became suddenly crested with fire. Peal followed peal—the repeated claps of thunder seemed to shake the very foundations of the rock, as they burst immediately above its head, or rolled echoing onwards amongst the mountainous heights and tors of Dartmoor.

The horse on which Standwich rode, startled by the lightning, now showed every sign of becoming restive. His mane seemed to bristle up; a white foam, the effects of extreme terror, covered his sides as his eye caught the flash, and he started back in affright. With great difficulty did Standwich rein in the terrified animal; and the Jew appeared to labour under a double alarm, that occasioned by the storm, and his fear lest some circumstance should arise to prevent the further progress of Standwich; whilst little Benjamin sat behind his uncle on the strong and steady horse, grasping him more firmly round the waist as his teeth literally chattered in his head with fright.

The exclamations of the Jew at this moment were of a mingled nature, partaking of all the various movements that by turns agitated his mind. “Be of good heart, Benjamin,” said he, to encourage his nephew, “there is nothing to fear. Nay, now you grip me so hard I can scarce breathe for thy grasp. What a clap was that! It is as the thunderings of Sinai, when the whole earth did quake; and smoke and fire, and a thick cloud was on the mount. Nay Captain Standwich, soothe him—soothe the good steed; it shall more avail thee than whip and spur. We are near the foot of Brent Tor; dismount, Benjamin, I say, dismount; ascend yonder rock, and set fire to the beacon: do it

quickly, or this rain, which begins to patter down, will assuredly prevent thy purpose. The brushwood was well dried—all is ready; haste thee, or it will be too late."

"I can't go, uncle," said Benjamin. "I won't go; I fear the lightning, which runs about the top of the Tor more than anywhere else."

"Thou shalt go, Benjamin," replied the Jew; "my feet are old, and weary with this day's hard labour, else would I do it. Go, then, and fear nothing, for he who made the thunder, and sent out the arrows of His lightning before Him, even He will buckler thee against their danger. Fear not, but do my bidding, for thou art my bone and my flesh, and must obey me, as I am thy kindred and thy elder."

So saying, Levi compelled the cowardly little Benjamin to dismount; and the boy quaking, grumbling, and yet eager to get his task done, since do it he must, set off at full speed to fire the beacon, a heap of dry wood and brushwood laid ready to give the signal to Noseworthy. No sooner had Benjamin scouted off, than Standwich, urging his horse close up to the side of Levi, thus addressed him in a hurried voice:

"Levi, I am about to quit you. I shall ride forward as swift as this animal can lay foot to ground; I will join you again in less than two hours near Morwel-ham. Do you ride on, and say as much to the pirate: there wait for me. I must now leave you, for your pace will not keep up with mine."

"Leave me!" cried the astonished Jew. "Where go you, Captain Standwich? I have done thus much; I have risked my own life to deliver you from yonder stronghold; and I have before told you, that unless the horse on which you ride is restored this night, and at a sober hour too, to its owner, I may fall into great danger and suspicion. Surely then you would not leave me, but make straight on for Morwel-ham, so that you may go on board the boat, and I return with the good steed to its master. And where would you go, that you thus talk of leaving me?"

Standwich paused a moment before he replied to the question. He then said, "Levi, you have indeed befriended me at my need, as no one, save yourself, could have had either the wit or the courage to do. I will not, therefore, deceive you, for you merit all my confidence; you shall know the truth. I am about to quit this country, perhaps for ever, for what but death awaits me should I venture to return to it? I am an outcast, but a

father's feelings prompt me once more, at any risk, to see my child. I go to seek her at Holwell."

"Are you mad?" cried Levi. "You rave, Captain Standwich; you are mad, quite gone mad, to think of it. Lady Slanning dwells in a house not far distant from a public town. She is surrounded by her people, and, it may be, by guests or friends. You will be taken again, and a dead man, as sure as I speak the word."

"I will risk it," said Standwich; "I am resolved to risk it. I have but one life to lose, and I will venture it once more to see my child!"

"Venture your own life you may," said Levi, "if you are thus bent on certain destruction, but do not, therefore, venture mine; which your being taken will certainly put in jeopardy. See, the lad hath fired the beacon. Look how it flames! There is but one way for safety; flee for your life to Morwel-ham; there the boat waits for you: but thrust not yourself into the lion's den, or there will be no deliverer if thus you run headlong into danger."

"It is in vain to argue," said Standwich; "I am determined. I will meet my child."

"You will meet your enemies," cried Levi, "and you are lost. They have hitherto chastised you with whips, but now they will chastise you with scorpions. Oh, wilful man! how art thou besotted with the vain imaginations of the thoughts of thy heart!"

"I go," said Standwich. "In two hours expect me at Morwel-ham;" and so saying he dashed the spurs, with which little Benjamin had equipped him when he brought the horses, into the spirited animal's sides, and set off at a full gallop. Levi called after him as loud as he could, "If thou wilt go to Holwell, enter the house by the back way through the wood."

It is probable that Standwich caught these words in his flight, as he waved his hand to the Jew in reply, and was soon lost to sight in the distance; whilst Levi remained fixed upon his horse, turning up his eyes and hands to heaven, and exclaiming against the madness and imprudence of the liberated captive.

By this time Benjamin had once more rejoined his uncle, being above all things desirous to make off from the spot after the exploit he had been compelled to perform; for since he had thus become an assistant in the escape of George Standwich, the little Jew was quite alive to the danger in which he stood; and no

sooner had he once more resumed his seat upon the crupper of Levi's horse than he said, "Uncle, I saw the captain ride forward as hard as he could gallop; where is he gone?"

"To the valley of Tophet, my child," replied Levi, "where the fire lies ready kindled to consume him. He is gone to Holwell House!"

"To Holwell House!" exclaimed Benjamin; "then, as sure as I live, he will be taken. Oh, uncle! what will become of us who have helped him on thus far?"

"Why truly, Benjamin," replied the Jew, "there remains but one way of safety for us to escape these perils, for, as we are, I hold ourselves little better than lost men. The thing may be desperate, but so is the danger. Now I bethink me, Sir Nicholas Slanning is still absent from home. If, therefore, this mad captain could but be persuaded not to tarry more than a few minutes at Holwell, all might yet be well. Perhaps, too," added Levi, after a short pause, as if a sudden thought struck him, "perhaps, too, should he be at a strait, I could help him off by declaring him to be one of my own people returned from a distant part, and now doing an errand of mine to the Lady Slanning. And the horse, likewise, on which he rides, I must return this very night, or make it good to the owner. I may yet save Standwich. Yes, I see there is no other way. He has led me into much peril, and I must risk somewhat to avoid the last danger. I must even after him; there is no help for it; so let us trust to One above us for deliverance; for, as Solomon saith, the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." And with these words Levi pushed on his horse, as fast as he could make the animal gallop, in the same direction as that already taken by George Standwich.

Standwich, in the mean time, had scarcely ridden within a mile of the town of Tavistock, when he had sufficient cause to repent him of his having taken this public road near so populous a town, instead of going direct to Morwel-ham, where he knew the pirate captain was waiting to convey him on board his vessel.

His escape from Lidford Castle, as already stated by Sir Nicholas Slanning in his conversation with Lady Howard, was become known. It had been discovered by one of the guard who had occasion to fetch an old head-piece which he had left in the chamber above the dungeon occupied by Standwich.

They sent out instantly detached parties in various directions;

communicated the intelligence to the mayor of Tavistock; and lost not a moment in setting on foot the most eager pursuit after Standwich: and if it is recollected that he made good his escape in the morning, and lay concealed all the day in Lidford woods, there was plenty of time for these proceedings ere he came in contact with the danger that resulted from them; so that, long before the beacon was fired, the very name of Standwich had become a terror, so desperate was he considered, to men, women, and children, for miles round.

Two of these active pursuers of the fugitive had learnt from a cottager that she had seen a man, mounted on horseback and riding hard, cross the Down beyond Brent Tor, and that he had several times looked back, as if to see if any one followed him. Having gained this information, they resolved to pursue the same road, and set off accordingly. In the mean time, Captain Standwich, as he drew nearer the town, judged it prudent to slacken his pace, thinking his extreme speed might occasion some suspicion, and that it would be the wiser and the safer plan now to ride gently till he should have cleared the precincts of the town, that he might seem like any other unconcerned traveller.

In this, however, he was mistaken; as, by slackening his pace at the present moment, it gave time to his pursuers to overtake him; and no motive of hidden fear causing them to restrain the mettle of their horses, they urged them on with increased vigour, till, perceiving a solitary horseman at some distance on the road before them, they did not doubt he must be the man pointed out by the cottager. The evening was fast closing in. To secure, therefore, their prisoner, it was now resolved that one of these armed men (for both were soldiers) should ride gently forward, and pass the solitary horseman without noticing him, till his companion should come up in the rear, so as to prevent either his flight or his retreat; and as a high bank of earth skirted each side of the road at this particular spot, it would be impossible he should escape by a lateral movement. This plan, aided by the dusk of evening, was executed with much caution, and Standwich became ensnared before he was aware of danger. In a moment the rear-guard, seeing his fellow had advanced in front of the solitary man, dashed the spur into his horse's sides, rode furiously up, and bid him "stand and declare himself in the Queen's name."

"A traveller," answered Standwich briefly, "journeying on my own affairs."

"That is the voice of George Standwich," cried the armed guard. "I arrest you in the Queen's name."

The guard was about to lay hold of Standwich, as his companion, who had ridden on a few paces before, turned his horse's head, in order to come to his assistance; but ere either of them could effect their purpose, Standwich, who we have before noticed as a man of extraordinary muscular power, stretched forth his arm, and with one bold effort hurled the assailant from his horse, laid him low on the ground, and instantly striking his spurs up to the rowel-head into the flanks of the spirited animal he rode, set off at a speed that defied the pursuit of the other horseman. But though his enemies could not follow him, a pistol-shot, discharged by one of them, did, and wounded Standwich in the right arm; the ball passing through the flesh.

Standwich, with the utmost composure, stooping his head, held the reins of the horse in his mouth, whilst with his left hand he drew forth a pistol from his girdle, and discharged its contents at the pursuer. One of the men was wounded, and that more seriously than his enemy, so that his comrade was compelled to stop and give him aid.

Thus beset, and bleeding from his wound, even in these moments of danger the natural hardihood of Standwich's temper (prompted by the ardent love he felt for his daughter, the only feeling that he possessed in which he appears at all in a respectable light) now determined him to go on; to risk all once more to see her. The peril was extreme; the attempt little better than the action of a madman. But Standwich possessed one pistol yet undischarged; and his was that daring, reckless sort of mind which held that the greater the difficulty and danger of an enterprise the more was it to be desired. Like most men also, of this character, he entertained a high sense of his own powers and resources, and often over-rated them. His uncommon success, which hitherto had enabled him to baffle every attempt of his enemies to take him for so many years, had inspired him likewise with the idea that he was not *fated* to fall by their machinations.

However much Standwich might rely on his fate, he did not think proper so far to neglect common prudence as to disregard the counsels of the Jew. He therefore at once rode up the avenue through the wood before noticed, being the same through which Lady Howard, on a previous evening, had tracked the steps of Sir John Fitz; and where she had on this memorable

evening set her agent, Betsy Grimald, to watch the approach of Fitz, when he should once more pass up it to hold a second interview with Lady Slanning.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Though perils did——
Abound, as thick as thought could make them, and
Appear in forms more horrid ; yet my duty,
As doth a rock against the chiding flood,
Should the approach of this wild river break,
And stand unshaken yours.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Standwich had ridden through the wood, he stopped his horse at a little distance from the house-door, and tied the animal by the reins to the bough of a large tree, before which there grew several shrubs, in order to conceal the horse from observation should any one chance to pass near the spot. He next proceeded with some caution towards the small garden-entry of the house ; the door stood ajar. Standwich paused a moment to consider, and then at once boldly entered.

He now found himself in a little vestibule, where there appeared several doors that led into lower apartments, and a flight of stairs stood facing the entrance from the wood, which terminated in a small corridor above, leading to the various upper rooms. The twilight of evening was rendered doubly obscure by the lowering and stormy atmosphere without ; for though at the present moment the rain had ceased, and the tempest blew with less violence, yet it was unusually dark, so that Standwich felt assured he should not instantly be detected, could he but manage, in the midst of this obscurity, to find the apartment of his daughter.

Whilst he paused for a moment to consider the best means of effecting his purpose, he saw one of the doors open above, and, instantly after, Lady Slanning herself crossed the corridor. She carried a lighted taper in her hand, and walked into another chamber. Standwich no longer deliberated. With hasty steps he ascended the stairs, and immediately followed his daughter into the apartment where he had seen her enter. She was alone ; and as her eye caught the vision (for a vision it seemed

to her rather than reality) of her father, his looks pale and haggard, his dress in great disorder and stained with blood, she uttered an involuntary scream of terror.

Standwich rushed towards her, caught her in his arms as she was falling to the ground, and said in the most agitated manner, "For heaven's mercy be silent! Fear me not; be silent, or my life is forfeited."

"My father!" said Lady Slanning faintly, "your looks!—that blood!"

"It is nothing," replied Standwich; "I am but wounded in the arm; the ball did but graze the skin—it is nothing."

The paleness of his countenance, however, seemed to contradict the words he uttered.

"But you are hurt," said Margaret; "I am sure you are much hurt. Holy Virgin! how can I assist you? How came you hither? Do you know the danger?"

"I know all," replied Standwich; "I have this night, at the risk of life itself, sought you. I have broken my prison. The means are devised for my escape. A few minutes, and we part for ever."

"O my father!" said Margaret, "why did you this, when, but this very night, Sir John Fitz sets out for London to procure your pardon from the Queen?"

Standwich was dumb a moment with amazement.

"I never knew it," he at length said; "and could Sir John Fitz do this for me, when I have injured him past all hope of recovery?"

"I know not what you mean," replied Lady Slanning; "but it was at my solicitation he delayed to execute the warrant for your death. He has generously consented to undertake your cause, to plead for you—to save you."

Every word that Margaret uttered struck a pang into the heart of the bold Standwich, a pang such as he had never known; and he stood before his child surprised, confounded, conscience-struck! The remembrance of the cruel manner in which he formerly treated the man who was now desirous to become his deliverer, filled his soul with remorse. "Margaret," he said, "look upon me, and curse me; I have ruined your peace, and that of my benefactor, for ever."

"Your words speak distraction, my father," replied Lady Slanning; "the events of this day have disordered your reason. Oh, let me in these moments, the first we have ever passed

together since I knew you were my father, let me rather fall at your feet, and beg your blessing?" She sunk on her knee before Standwich as she spoke.

"My blessing, my child!" said Standwich, "how can my blessing be of benefit to the child whom I have conspired to injure, even in the tenderest point? Margaret, in this world we may never meet again; yet I cannot part till I have obtained pardon for the past. I feel in these moments the bitter pangs of unavailing remorse. I have erred in what I thought would be for your happiness, as I have erred in all things that concern you. Can you forgive me? Send me not from you with the thought that hereafter Margaret may live to curse my memory."

"If, my father," said Lady Slanning, "you now allude to that hour in which you wrought upon my mind to make me promise to become the wife of Slanning, I can pardon you. You believed, as I did, that John Fitz was no more."

"There, Margaret," cried Standwich, with much emotion, "there lies my crime to you and him; I knew that Fitz was living."

"Did you, could you, know this?" exclaimed Margaret; "Oh, could you do this, and know my misery!"

"Forbear," said Standwich, "forbear these reproaches. Forgive me, Margaret, or, if vengeance will better satisfy your feelings, speak but the word; take a full requital for those wrongs I have heaped on you and Fitz. I will yield myself to justice; to-morrow you may look upon the headless trunk of him who was your father."

"Speak not thus," said Margaret; "I do forgive. I would forget the past, but that memory is too faithful in my breast. Think of me no more; think upon yourself; upon your safety. After what you have done there can be no security for you here. I must tell you (and why should I conceal it?) before an hour is past I expect Sir John Fitz in this chamber."

Standwich uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Nay, be not alarmed, my father," said Margaret; "he comes to impart to me the means he is about to pursue to obtain your pardon. Think then what will be his feelings to find that the very man, to save whose life he will risk every imputation that may be cast on his own honour, is escaped; that he has broken the bonds of his prison, before they fell at the command of his royal mistress. Sir John Fitz may suffer for your act, he

may be suspected of connivance—of treason ; how then can he plead for you should you be retaken ? There is no safety but in flight."

"No," said Standwich, "I will not fly ; I have ruined the happiness of Fitz, and he would have repaid that act by becoming my preserver ; I will not now, therefore, expose him to loss of honour as well as peace. I will surrender myself to my pursuers."

"You shall not," exclaimed Margaret ; "they will murder you. How came you hither ? Have you the means of speedy flight ?"

"I was mounted on a horse," said Standwich, "whose fleetness can scarce be matched. It is tied up to the trees below in the wood."

"Go, then," said Lady Slanning ; "here I have no power to save you. Should the emissaries of the government seek you here, you are lost. A rebel who has broken prison would never be spared. Yet you grow paler, my father," she continued, gazing on him with an expression of the utmost anxiety, "paler every moment whilst I speak. I see it, you are faint from loss of blood ! Your wound is more than you would tell me—I will bind it up ; you shall refresh your fainting lips with wine before you leave me. I will do all in a few moments, and then for your retreat with the speed of life or death."

Lady Slanning had scarcely finished these words when she flew to a cabinet that stood in her chamber, opened it in all haste, and took out a small phial with other necessities for the dressing of a wound ; since it was a common practice with the ladies of this period to act the part of the good Samaritan amongst their poor neighbours, and most of them, therefore, were possessed of such simple drugs and remedies as might be needful on an emergency. Standwich bared his arm whilst his daughter speedily applied to it a small quantity of the contents of the phial. On uncovering the arm the wound bled afresh, and some drops of blood fell on the floor of the apartment. Margaret quickly completed the dressing, and carefully bound up his arm.

She then brought him wine, and, after having swallowed some portion of it, he appeared to revive from the faintness occasioned by loss of blood, and his extreme agitation during the late scene.

"You think much of this wound, my child," said Standwich,

as he put the cup down upon the table, "yet it is nothing. The agitation of my feelings at the thoughts of parting from you has caused me to suffer more than this slight harm could have done, but for such a cause to irritate its effects. And must I leave you! must I say farewell? You asked my blessing, Margaret, but now—receive it, my beloved child! No day that may yet be numbered to me in this world shall pass over my head but I will implore all the saints and holy ones of heaven to bless my child. I go, Margaret—I leave you, perhaps, for ever; and when you think on your unhappy father, remember that, though guilty of many crimes, stern in his nature, and little used to soft affections, he had yet a heart fond and repentant to you."

Lady Slanning received her father's last embrace in silence, whilst tears rolled down her cheeks, and sobs of grief choked her utterance. Again and again did Standwich embrace and bless her, till, as he hung over her, she suddenly raised her head, and exclaimed, "I hear the tramp of a horse's feet; that must be Sir John Fitz who comes! Hark! he comes round by the path through the wood—there is no remedy, I must meet him. I will trust him with all the truth—he shall know you are here; I will rely upon his honour, upon his mercy."

Lady Slanning rushed from her father's embrace as she spoke, left the room, and passed with the utmost speed down the stairs. Standwich now stood quite still, endeavouring to listen to what passed below. He heard the private door leading into the wood open; there was the pause of a moment, and then arose the murmur of voices in the vestibule. Again the door seemed to move, but if to open or to shut he could not distinguish, and footsteps ascending the stairs immediately succeeded this noise. In another instant Lady Slanning re-entered, followed, not as Standwich expected by Sir John Fitz, but by Levi the Jew, who was apparently half beside himself with terror and amazement.

"Fly, George Standwich!" cried the old man, as soon as he could command breath enough to speak; "I have been detained by the way, I have been stopped by armed men, who are seeking you far and wide. You have wounded one of the guard of Lidford, who says he attempted to arrest you in your escape from prison. You have brought this last trouble on yourself. Oh, had you but hearkened to my counsel! I was stayed, these men would inquire of me if, perchance, I had seen such a one as they described you pass by me as I journeyed on my way. But Jona-

than was not more true to David than I have been to you ; and hither have I posted after you as fast as the beast could carry me, to show you of these things ; and even as Jonathan shot the arrow to be as a signal unto David, even so——”

“ You come to give me the signal of flight,” said Standwich, interrupting the scriptural examples that Levi resorted to on all occasions of his life. “ I will not neglect your counsel. Farewell, Margaret ; my horse is at hand in the wood ; I will instantly mount him.”

“ Not for your life,” cried Levi ; “ you were known to be mounted. It is a horseman who is sought for everywhere. You will be surprised, overpowered, and secured by numbers. You must lie concealed, or some man must protect you who is mighty amongst this people. Here you cannot stay, for here I verily believe some of the captains will be anon.

Lady Slanning, who had listened with eagerness to every word that dropped from the lips of the Jew, instantly seized upon a suggestion to which one sentence he had uttered gave birth in her mind : and she said, with the utmost energy, “ Heaven has inspired the thoughts of this old man to save you ; he is right ; some one in power must protect you. Attend to my counsel. Yield yourself a prisoner to Sir John Fitz ; trust to his honour ; cast yourself at his feet ; he is generous, he will raise you up in safety. I will go with you ; I will plead to him to save you—plead to him on my knees, and never leave the earth till my prayer is granted. Follow me ; I know a path by which we may avoid the public way to Fitz-ford. And do you, good old man, go round by the open road, mount your horse ; it may mislead pursuit ; and if you are stopped no harm can come to you, since you cannot be mistaken for George Standwich.”

“ It is true,” said Levi, “ the dove of peace cannot be mistaken for the eagle of war. I will do this thing ; and Benjamin, who waits without, shall also mount George Standwich’s horse, that the good beast may be restored in due season to its owner, and the charge for his hire be paid down ; it was a bargain, and Levi, the son of Adonijab, is true to the words of his mouth ; anon, I also will draw nigh to Fitz-ford. There, belike, I may hear somewhat that shall satisfy my mind as to the safety of Captain Standwich ; for I know not how it is, but, sinful and warfaring as he is, my bowels yearn to him in compassion and brotherly love. I shall this night find no rest for the sole of my foot till I know he is housed and protected at Fitz-ford in the

honourable keeping of its master. And in one thing I would beseech you to mark me, George Standwich, as I have done you some service, though you have turned it to foolishness by your own wilful deed, I would entreat you not to peril my safety, nor that of the lad Benjamin, by naming me as the man who loosed you from your bonds at Lidford Castle."

"Fear not," said Standwich, "I would rather forfeit my life than betray you."

"I am ready," said Lady Slanning, who had employed the interval of the Jew's long speech by throwing a cloak over her shoulders, and making some hasty preparations for her departure. "Now follow me in silence; step lightly down the stairs that none of my people may come upon us to see who passes. On my return I will find some excuse for my absence that shall cover your retreat. Be silent as you value life, and may the mercy of heaven go with us."

"May the God of Israel be thy deliverer!" said Levi in a solemn voice: "may he go before thy steps, even as he did before those of his people when he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt; and may the darkness of this hour be to thee as the darkness of the cloud that hid them from the sight of Pharaoh and his host, who followed after for their destruction. Farewell to thee, Standwich; think sometimes of the old man who owed his life to thee, and held it at thy command when gratitude called it to thy service. Farewell! farewell."

So saying Levi quitted the apartment, and all three descended the stairs with caution and in silence. They met no interruption, as this was the most private and retired part of the house; and once more bidding a hasty adieu to the kindhearted Levi, Lady Slanning, devoted to her purpose to save her father, set off with him through a private path in the wood on their way to Fitz-ford.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Away to heaven respective lenity,
And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now !
Now, Tybalt, take the villain back again
That late thou gavest me.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE news of Standwich having wounded the guard soon spread far and wide; and, as Levi had stated, every means was resorted to in the hope to secure him. A party of the troops, who had just come into Tavistock on their way from Launceston, where they had been stationed to suppress Cuthbert Mayne's short-lived attempt at rebellion, were immediately dispersed in small parties, and by different roads, so as to render it almost impossible that the fugitive should escape; and it is more than probable Standwich must have been taken had he attempted to continue his flight from Holwell in the manner he had proposed.

So great was the excitement, that it became known to Sir Nicholas Slanning as he was passing from the house of Lady Howard to his own, in order to surprise Sir John Fitz in his secret visit to his wife. This occasioned some unavoidable delay. Slanning had lately headed a company of the Queen's forces at Launceston, and to pass unnoticed, to give no counsel in an affair of so much consequence, would, in the jealous times in which he lived, have exposed his honour and his loyalty to severe imputations, if not to suspicion. But for this short delay, Slanning must have arrived at Holwell before his wife had quitted the house in the hope to save her father. Sir Nicholas also received a confused and exaggerated account of the affair between the guard and the fugitive. Standwich, he was told, was wounded in the first instance by a pistol-shot fired after him, and had been seen to ride across the Down as hard as he could towards Holwell House.

It is almost needless to say that these circumstances came to a mind so prepossessed and jealous as that of Slanning with the worst augury, and his irritable state of feeling now worked him up to the belief that Fitz had contrived the escape of Standwich, in order that he might be made a useful, as he was a desperate,

agent in assisting him to bear off Lady Slanning during the absence of her husband. The prepossessions of jealousy are as wild as they are ungovernable; and though Slanning, like Othello, attempted to impose upon himself the belief that he was "not easily jealous," yet, like the noble Moor, "trifles light as air" were to him "confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ;" for in such an irritated and perverted state was every feeling of his soul that not the slightest shadow of suspicion could have crossed his path at this moment but would have been invested by him with all the credit due to substance and reality.

Thus prepossessed, thus prepared to find his worst fears true, the imagination of the reader will better figure to his own mind than we could hope to do it—the rage, the disappointed revenge, the madness of Slanning, when on his return home he found his wife fled. He had entered the house, as agreed upon, by the private way, thinking that in so doing he should the more readily detect her in company with Sir John Fitz. The private door, however, he found open, his wife's apartment empty, a lighted taper burning on the table, one or two of the drawers in her cabinet remaining open, and several things belonging to it tossed on the ground in great disorder. The wine, the half-emptied cup, did not escape notice; and the glove which Standwich had taken from his hand, and cast down on the table at the time Margaret bound up his wound, was a startling evidence; but, above all, the witness of the spots of blood so recently dropped on the ground that they were still wet, came across his sight like a horrid conviction, that, with the rapidity of lightning, flashed the truth upon his mind, and withered his last hope to find his wife guiltless.

Sir Nicholas now remembered the report that Standwich was wounded by the man who fired at him, yet so determined (thus thought the unhappy husband) was he to act as a faithful agent, that, even in this wounded condition, he had sought her, and most probably in company with Fitz had carried his purpose into effect. In this state of mind he summoned to his wife's apartment her page William, who Lady Howard assured him had been the bearer of Margaret's letter to Sir John Fitz at Lidford.

No sooner had William obeyed this summons, and innocently enough expressed his astonishment at the sudden return of his master, and the violent manner in which he was called up to him, than Slanning, thinking he was in league with the traitors, seized him by the throat, and, with the gestures and expressions

of a madman, threatened the page with instant death if he denied the truth.

Thus threatened, the trembling page acknowledged that his lady had sent him to Lidford with a packet to Sir John Fitz, and had cautioned him to name to no one the circumstance, as some business of the greatest consequence rendered it absolutely necessary she should hold a private interview with Fitz, notwithstanding the absence of her husband. He further confessed that he had brought back an answer to Lady Slanning, which he saw her read and deposit in a drawer of her cabinet. He likewise acknowledged that, on the same evening, Sir John Fitz had been there to see her in private, and that she had instructed him to refuse admission to Lady Howard. He was also aware that Sir John Fitz had been expected again on this very night, as his mistress bade him not to disturb her till the visit of Fitz should be passed. This was all, he said, that he knew of the matter; where his lady was now gone he knew no more than the child unborn, for he was even ignorant, till now, she had left her chamber at all. Satisfied that the terror-struck page had really revealed every circumstance with which he was acquainted, Slanning suffered him to retire.

The moment he was gone Sir Nicholas proceeded to search the cabinet, and speedily found in it that very letter written by Sir John Fitz to Margaret from Lidford, in reply to hers. Slanning tore open the letter. The first words of its contents exasperated him, when he read that Fitz acknowledged receiving the token, and the right which the same gave Margaret over him; also that he would attend to her counsel, and requested, therefore, he might be admitted by the private way, since (as the letter said) "for a surety, their meeting was not a matter for the world's debate."

Scarcely had Slanning read this letter than he dashed it on the ground, and trampled it under foot, as he called upon the name of God to witness that, ere the sun rose again, he would tear his wife from the bosom of her seducer, and requite his injured honour with the villain's blood. In a moment, however, he seemed to recollect himself, and to remember that his wife was fled!—fled by the assistance of Standwich, and he knew not whither.

This thought came upon the mind of the wretched man with tenfold bitterness, as it frustrated at once his hope of vengeance. He paced the apartment with hasty strides; he clenched his

hand and gnashed his teeth in the fury of disappointment, while the light foam of wrath stood on his convulsed lip.

At this crisis the genius of evil, who never deserted the bosom of Lady Howard, whispered to her mind an expedient to consummate the dreadful purpose over which she had so long brooded in her heart, and she instantly obeyed the suggestion. "I will yet give you the means to pursue your wife and her infamous seducer," said Lady Howard; "Standwich, no doubt, is the agent of her flight and the companion of it. He will not leave her till he gives her into the arms of Fitz. Look! see the marks of blood, the blood of the wounded Standwich. My hound shall track his footsteps. Here, Redfang! Redfang!"

Sir Nicholas Slanning started up at the hearing of these words, he rushed to the door, threw it wide abroad, as Lady Howard led her hound up to the spots of blood upon the ground, and suffered the animal to become acquainted with the scent; and then, by words, voice, and gesture, encouraged him on to the pursuit. The hound bounded forward, rushed down the stairs followed by Slanning, who did not pause an instant lest he should lose his guide. The bloodhound led the way towards the gates of Fitz-ford.

Before we mention the result of Sir Nicholas's enterprise at such a crisis it becomes necessary we should pause a moment to state some circumstances that occurred but a brief space before his arrival. Standwich, urged by the advice of his daughter, had yielded himself once more a prisoner to Sir John Fitz, whom they found on the point of quitting Fitz-ford to seek Lady Slanning, according to appointment; and, though it may well be supposed the latter felt justly indignant at the thought that the man for whose life he was about to plead to his sovereign should, by this new act of desperation, have rendered the state but the more inveterate against him, yet, overcome by the manner in which Lady Slanning pleaded for her father's life, he felt he had no power to resist her supplications. For some time the contest of his opposing thoughts and feelings was severe, till overcome by the remembrance of early affection, that still fondly clung to his heart, he at length consented that for the night he would shelter Standwich as a state prisoner under his own care, on his word being solemnly pledged that he would not again attempt his escape.

The agitated state of his mind during this painful scene may be better conceived than described. Scarcely, however, had he

received the plighted faith of Standwich, and had acceded to the solicitations of Margaret, when Andrew Morton (who of all the domestics was alone acquainted with the person of Standwich, and therefore knew who was with his master) suddenly came into the chamber where this scene took place, and told Fitz that several persons from the town magistrates demanded an instant audience with him, having brought to him a communication of some consequence from an officer of Government.

Thus taken by surprise, Fitz felt embarrassed at the approach of these people, since he was now in the chamber where he usually received such communications, and he did not wish to excite suspicions amongst his household by any sudden concealment of Standwich, as, till the Queen's mercy might be solicited, he had purposed removing him to a house distant from his own in the country.

In order, therefore, to obviate any possible discovery or the conjectures of curiosity, Fitz bade Andrew Morton follow him out of the room, as he resolved to receive the communication of the townspeople in the gate-house, under whose wide archway they now awaited his pleasure. Here he gave them a brief audience; and found that their purpose was to make him acquainted with the escape of Standwich from Lidford, his rencontre with the guard, and all other particulars; and they concluded with the request that Sir John Fitz would send out some of his own people to assist in retaking the fugitive.

Fitz, however, gave no promise to comply with this request, but dismissed the townspeople, after thanking them for the trouble they had taken in waiting upon him. Whilst doing this he stood immediately under the wide archway of the gate-house, where the darkness of the hour was dispelled by two or three torches that were burning for the purpose of affording light to the entry.

Scarcely had the townsmen departed when the cry of a hound in pursuit was heard, followed up by the appearance of Redfang, as he passed bounding within the gates, and in another moment Sir Nicholas Slanning entered the same precincts.

The light of the torches gleamed full on the countenance of Fitz. Slanning instantly recognised him; and, laying his hand on his sword, he said in a tone scarcely articulate with passion, "Draw, villain! defend thyself! or my sword shall give me a passage over thy dead body to those thou hast sheltered here!"

The astonishment of Fitz may be readily conceived; but the

violent gesture and menacing words of Slanning compelled him to draw in self-defence, as he stepped back a few paces, and said with much composure, "What means this conduct, Sir Nicholas? I have not injured you, nor is there need that you should seek your way into my house by first committing murder on its master. Whom do you seek here?"

"My wife, villain!" exclaimed Slanning. "My wife, whom you have stolen from me, and the rebel you have liberated as the base pander of your guilt. Defend thyself, for thou art traitor and seducer, and thy blood shall answer the charge."

"Such a charge is madness," said Fitz; "and to such I answer nothing but that it is false. Put up your sword, and speak me fairly, for I stand not here to be thus insulted by the ravings of any man."

"I speak thee fairly!" cried Slanning. "When thou hast robbed me in my absence of all that is dear to me! I will never entreat thee but to measure swords with me, and to strike for life or death. Do thou entreat, do thou fall at my feet, and beg me to spare the wretch who has abused alike truth, honour, and the confidence of his prince! Once more I defy thee for traitor, liar, and coward, if thou wilt not strike."

"Words such as these shall never be coupled with the name of Fitz," replied his antagonist, with a degree of passion that he had not yet shown; whilst, conscious that some strange prepossession must exist in the mind of Slanning to drive him on to these acts of violence, he seemed, even yet, reluctant to use his sword.

At this moment the villain Andrew Morton (who, perhaps, for his own safety, wished that one of them should fall, so as in either case to free him from the fear of his master) said to Sir John Fitz: "What, my master! do you stand there to hear yourself called coward, and that whilst you carry a sword in your hand?"

Fitz, whose mind had hitherto wavered between the wish to spare the impassioned Slanning and his own desire to avenge the insults cast upon him, was easily exasperated by these few words uttered even by his servant, as where there is an equal balance a hair's weight will turn the scale, and replying to the now renewed menaces of Slanning with these words, "I will encounter thee—be thy blood on thy own head," he threw himself into a posture of defence, as Slanning attacked him with uncontrollable fury.

Both, however, were now almost equally warmed by passion,

and both were skilful masters of the weapon with which they played for the stake of life or death. The combat was but short; for Slanning's foot slipping at the moment his antagonist made a desperate lunge, the sword passed through his body. No sooner did Fitz see him fall, than, horror-struck by the success of his own arm, he cast down his weapon, ran to the wounded man, lifted him from the ground, and bade Andrew Morton raise the house and bring instant help.

The alarm now spread instantaneously; for the clashing of swords under the gateway in the court (which was some distance from the house itself) had not been immediately heard by those within. The first who ran towards the scene of contest and bloodshed was George Standwich, who assisted Fitz and his people in bearing the dying man into the house. A servant was despatched to bring surgical aid, without delay, from the town.

Slanning was raised gently, his doublet removed, and every effort made to stanch the blood that flowed in torrents from the wound: by this time the alarm was communicated to the whole house. What words could paint the distress of Lady Slanning on learning that her husband had fallen and by the sword of Fitz! So great was her horror that for some time she seemed scarcely to understand the words that were spoken. Not a tear was in her eye; but she looked with a countenance pale as ashes, and with an expression of vacant wonder, upon the domestic who came to summon her to attend the death-bed of her husband. A few moments elapsed; she made an extraordinary effort to support some degree of self-command, and motioned the domestic to lead forward.

As she entered the room she saw Slanning lying on the bed, supported by Standwich, while Fitz vainly endeavoured to stanch the bleeding wound; and, in the distraction of his mind, at one moment entreating the forgiveness of his fallen opponent, at another uttering some broken exclamations of despair at the thoughts of the deed he had committed, and again bidding his people to send out anew to procure the help of a surgeon, or it would come too late.

Sir Nicholas (whom all present saw was in a dying state) appeared to retain the possession of his senses, for he fixed such a heart-rending look upon his wife as she entered the room that her whole soul was filled with agonies almost too acute to be borne; and the thought that probably some misunderstanding relative to her renewed connexion with Sir John Fitz had been

the cause of the quarrel, which was likely to end thus tragically the life of her husband, rushed on her mind with all the feelings of unavailing remorse. Still anxious to satisfy him, even in death, for she fancied there was an upbraiding and doubtful expression in his looks, she rushed to the bedside, knelt down, took his cold hand within her grasp, and said in a voice that struck upon the ear of the dying man like that of an angel whose accents spoke peace and comfort to his soul in death, "My husband! oh, that we should meet thus! and that it is here I must tell you I came this night to seek Sir John Fitz, to beg of him to shelter my father, and, if possible, to save him from death. The secret of my birth is revealed; I am the child of Standwich."

Slanning was speechless, but it seemed he perfectly comprehended these words, since he feebly pressed the hand of Margaret, looked tenderly upon her, raised his head and cast his eyes on Fitz; his lips moved, and again he looked upon his wife. It was the last, for in a few minutes he expired from loss of blood, without a groan. Lady Slanning soon after was removed from the chamber of death, in a state almost as lifeless as that of the corpse from which they tore her away.

To describe the scene of terror and of misery which this night filled the house of Fitz-ford would require a pen of far greater skill than ours. Suffice it to say, as the misery was great, so was it greatly felt by all; for both Sir Nicholas Slanning and Sir John Fitz were beloved and respected as gentlemen of high worth and honour. The domestics, who had hastened to the town immediately after the fatal affray in order to procure surgical assistance, had spread the alarm; and it circulated rapidly through a small country place of which Sir John was the head member. All persons eagerly rushed towards Fitz-ford; some from sympathy, others to gain more certain accounts, and many solely from that excitement of curiosity which any sudden wonder never fails to create.

In these moments of confusion it became known that the rebel Standwich, on this very night, had surrendered himself a prisoner to Sir John Fitz, who, the circumstance thus becoming public, could no longer shelter him from pursuit. Standwich, overpowered by the late scene of horror that had passed before his eyes, yielded without any attempt at resistance, and was instantly carried off by the guard, who again received him into custody.

Soon after, his innocent and most afflicted daughter was removed from Fitz-ford by Glanville, who, the moment he learnt

the fatal event, hastened thither once more to offer to her the shelter of his own roof, and the consolation of his generous care. Margaret was accordingly conveyed to Kilworthy, though in a state that could scarcely be deemed existence.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The prophecy has tracked me from my birth,
Be it fulfilled !

MANUSCRIPT PLAY.

DURING the scene of general dismay, when so many persons had introduced themselves within the gates of Fitz-ford to learn what they could to satisfy their curiosity, one accompanied the surgeon who came from a very different motive. This was Barnabas Ferule, the old schoolmaster, so long the humble friend and adviser of Sir Hugh Fitz in his astrological and other studies. The surgeon came too late to be of any use to Sir Nicholas Slanning ; he was therefore dismissed, and hastened to offer his services to the widow of the deceased on her removal to Kilworthy, though, in her condition, all human aid must necessarily be vain and hopeless.

Barnabas, however, lingered in the apartment at Fitz-ford. He saw the distracted state of mind under which the unhappy Sir John Fitz laboured ; and love for him, as well as regard for the memory of his father, made the old man determine that he would not leave him in the hour of his distress. He had also another object in view, which made him desirous to linger till the crowd should be dispersed, and the house be reduced to some degree of order for the night.

Barnabas knew that the late Sir Nicholas Slanning had a kinsman high in power and of large estate, who had never been friendly to the family of Fitz ; and he doubted not this kinsman would loudly demand justice on Sir John for the death of Slanning, as he was known to be an adversary of the most unrelenting temper. There had been no witness of the late affray, except Andrew Morton ; and that very Andrew had thought proper to set off from Fitz-ford, notwithstanding the misery of all around him, and to desert his master the moment he found that George

Standwich was once more in custody of the guard, who was about reconveying him to prison.

We pass in silence the affectionate zeal with which the old man (presuming on the favour his deceased patron had always shown for him, and his long attachment to the family) stated all his reasons and arguments to prevail with Fitz to fly that very night, and commence his journey to sue for the pardon of the Queen. Though Fitz had renounced all hopes of happiness for himself, yet, as we have elsewhere observed, he had a considerable share of pride in his character that never deserted him, and especially in whatever he thought might concern the honour of his name. Suffice it to say that Barnabas at length prevailed, and Fitz consented to the proposal, though he repeatedly declared that in doing so he complied merely from the wish to preserve the honour of his family, as he was totally regardless of what became of himself. It was farther agreed, as Andrew Morton could nowhere be found, and Fitz did not choose to trust any other follower in an affair of so much import, that the honest schoolmaster should, on the present occasion, attend him as a confidential servant and friend in this long and painful journey to London.

The preparations for such an enterprise had been previously made, since Fitz, on the morrow, had designed to set out in order to plead the cause of Standwich. He set out at once, accompanied only by the kind-hearted Barnabas; and as every precaution was taken to leave Fitz-ford in the utmost privacy, and by a solitary track from the house, they met with no interruption.

That night they travelled but a few miles, halting at an obscure inn to avoid notice; and the next day, when they were about to mount their horses to continue the journey by easy stages, for Fitz seemed too ill to admit any extraordinary speed, Barnabas remarked that he looked haggard, with a blackness about the eyes, and an unnatural glow of red upon his cheek, whilst his lips were livid, which indicated a fevered state of body, and a mind that had known neither rest nor sleep during the night.

Once more they set out. It was early; the dew lay on the grass, and glittered, like tears in the eye of beauty, upon every tender flower and herb of the field. The rising sun gradually dispersed the thick morning mists as he commenced his journey of the day, like a generous benefactor whose bounty disperses the clouds of sorrow, distributing in his course blessings and

benefits on mankind. The air blew soft and fresh, as the lark, the herald of the morning, sprang on buoyant pinions, and warbled her notes of praise. Sweet is the "hour of prime," cheerful and glad the sight of creation, and the voice of created things; but by the melancholy soul even nature herself is viewed with a perverted mind. The blue sky, the fresh air, the green woods, and the melody of their feathered tenants, cease to please, and all outward things receive their colouring from the worn and darkened mind.

So was it with this unfortunate wanderer from his home. There was nothing in the face of nature that could give him pleasure; and, indeed, during the whole of that day Fitz seemed to pass on his journey like a man who walks in his sleep, wholly unconscious of every thing around him.

Barnabas remarked also, that, whenever they halted to refresh their horses, he called for water, and swallowed it with eagerness in large quantities; and, though he persisted in keeping on his way till the tired animals could no longer hold out, yet he never once alluded to the object of his journey; and at length rode so slowly on that it was not till late in the evening they once more put up at a small inn for the night. The fears of Barnabas were now raised to a considerable height, as he thought that the strange demeanour of Sir John Fitz during the whole day indicated a degree of fever that had disordered his senses, and with kind anxiety did he urge him to retire to bed, and try to take some repose.

At first Fitz was silent; but the affectionate manner in which this was repeated at last seemed to awaken a sense of feeling, in spite of the profound apathy in which he had been plunged during so many hours; for Fitz thanked him in a tone and manner more like himself than he had yet done since they left Fitz-ford. Delighted at this, in order to give a turn to the thoughts of Fitz, though a melancholy one (for what but a melancholy theme would be admitted by a mind in such a state), Barnabas ventured to introduce some discourse relative to his deceased patron, the father of the sufferer.

"Ay," said Barnabas, as he grew warm in expressing his reminiscences of old Sir Hugh, "I remember my dear patron as well as if he had died but yesterday. Many were the hours and the days we passed together. Poor old Sir Hugh! he laboured sore to come at the actions of spirits after he read Doctor John Dee's book, but he could never succeed; though he had a

curious fancy at astrology, and could sometimes set a scheme or cast a nativity tolerably well. I am sure, when you look back upon old times, though they give pleasure, yet the remembrance seems like a dream, all is so changed now."

"I remember all," said Fitz, "but to forget is better;" and he drew his bonnet over his brows as he spoke, as if he would hide some feeling of strong emotion. "Call up no other remembrances, old man," he added; "there are some thoughts I cannot bear. Leave me—I would be alone."

"Do not say so," cried Barnabas; "I cannot leave you—I will not do it. Your father was like a friend to me, though I was a poor man; and how can I but love his son?"

"I did not think that there was even a dog left that cared for me," said Fitz—"far less a fellow creature. I was fated to misery from the hour of my birth."

"Do not think so," cried Barnabas. "Believe me, old Sir Hugh was quite mistaken."

"About what?" said Fitz, with a look of surprise; for he really did not comprehend at this moment the drift of the school-master.

"Why, about your horoscope," cried Barnabas; "for, when Sir Hugh used at times to be very uneasy about the nativity he cast at your birth, I always told him he put up the scheme in a wrong house; for you see the cusp of——"

"My nativity!" exclaimed Fitz, interrupting him; "I remember—my father spoke of it on his deathbed."

"Did he so?" said Barnabas.

"Ay, he did," replied Fitz, "and made me give him a promise, which I have broken. What did my father predict was to be my fate?"

"I assure you," said Barnabas, endeavouring to evade the last question, "I can take it upon my own experience to say it, that, though Sir Hugh had a curious fancy in astrology, he was apt, nevertheless, to work his schemes on a wrong principle. I could never persuade him to follow implicitly the learned Agrippa."

"But mine! but mine!" exclaimed Fitz, impatiently; "I *will* know it!"

The loud and hasty voice in which this was spoken considerably alarmed Barnabas, who, knowing the irritable state of mind and body, and the suffering Sir John Fitz had undergone during the day, feared to contradict him; so that, though he

again deprecated the manner in which Sir Hugh had cast his son's nativity, he told him it had predicted great sorrow and a violent death.

Fitz heard Barnabas declare this with an unchanged countenance; he made no reply whatever, but paced the apartment with slow steps and folded arms, brooding over his own thoughts, and soon after seemed to sink again into that dreadful state of apathy in which he had been plunged during the former part of the journey.

Though the day had been delightful, yet the evening closed in with a very different aspect; for as the first was sunny and cheerful like the hopes of youth, so the latter, as it may often be seen in the fortunes of declining life, was chill and stormy. Fitz now threw himself into a chair opposite a large Gothic window, for the inn was an ancient building of the fourteenth century. He fixed his vacant gaze upon its tall shafts and diamond-shaped panes of glass. But he was unmoved by the solemn light that streamed through them into the apartment, as the moon, now radiant, and again overshadowed by the drifting clouds that passed across her disc, gave alternate light and darkness to the heavens. The doors and windows creaked and shook in the old house, as the mournful piping of the wind came shrilly upon the ear, like the complaining voice of a wandering spirit of the air.

The alarming state of Fitz greatly distressed Barnabas, and again did he beseech the unhappy young man to take rest and refreshment. The latter Fitz utterly refused, except to repeat the draught of pure water he had so frequently taken during the day. He consented, however, to go to bed, but would not admit the attendance of his faithful old follower; and as Barnabas took him by the hand he remarked that it was dry and burning. Once more he begged he might be suffered to attend him; but Fitz waved his hand in silence, retired to his chamber, and secured the door.

Barnabas was lodged near him; and so uneasy did he feel on Sir John's account that he could obtain but little rest. As he lay watching, counting the clock that told the hour in the church steeple with a heavy stroke, he now would listen attentively, and then he would mistake the sounds of the winds (as they moaned, or, at times, even screamed in the tempest) for the voice of human agony and suffering, till, unable to contain his fears, he would start from his bed and look around him, whilst a

cold shudder passed over his frame, as if he expected some spirit of the night to meet his eyes. Nothing, however, was to be seen but the silvered flood of moonlight that poured through the windows into his chamber. A cloud came along, and all again was darkness. More than once did Barnabas steal from his warm bed to listen at the door of Fitz's chamber, but all was profoundly still. Hoping, therefore, that the distracted thoughts of Fitz had found some suspension in sleep, he returned to his own bed, where, worn out with a degree of fatigue and anxiety that was beyond both his strength and his years, he at length slumbered for a few hours.

When Barnabas arose, he went straight to the chamber where Sir John Fitz lay, as he had promised he would call him at an early hour, to pursue his journey in the morning. He rapped gently on the door: no answer was returned. Again he knocked, and louder; the silence still continued unbroken; again he repeated his call, till at last his alarms rose to such a pitch that he called up assistance in the house. The door was burst open. Who shall speak the horror of Barnabas, when the first object that caught his eye was the body of Fitz, lying across the bed, and weltering in his blood?

His sword, the fatal instrument of self-destruction, lay on the ground, as it had dropped from his hand; and there could be little doubt that, in the state of fever and mental distraction of the unhappy sufferer, the ill-timed mention of Sir Hugh's prediction had wrought his melancholy mind to a pitch of absolute madness, so that he resolved *himself* to fulfil the destiny which he believed he was born to suffer.

How many instances of a presumptuous inquiry into futurity have, like the present, become the *cause* of the very effect they pretend to foretell! Yet so little did the simple Barnabas feel this (and happy was it for his own peace that he did not), that, after the first shock of this sad event was over, he was heard to remark—"He was now convinced old Sir Hugh had better skill in casting a nativity than he had given him credit for."

The rest of our melancholy tale may be briefly told.

The body of the unfortunate Sir Nicholas Slanning was buried in the church of Bickleigh, about ten miles distant from Tavistock. His monument, with the effigies of himself and his wife lying on an altar-tomb, still exist. These are sculptured in stone, and rest beneath a canopy, supported by pillars. On one side of them may be seen the figure of death, stabbing, with a dagger,

a warrior in the breast, and the following rude but emphatic couplet yet remains :

As stout as thou art,
I wilt strike to thy heart.

The epitaph is in Latin,* and alludes to the manner of Sir John Fitz's death, as well as to that of Sir Nicholas Slanning.† It has been paraphrased in English, as follows, by one who has investigated, with equal talent and zeal, the local and historical antiquities of his native place.‡

I in my murderer my avenger found ;
Who dealt to both the homicidal wound ;
For, of just heaven the retribution due,
Me and himself by the same sword he slew."

Lady Howard, who played so prominent a part in the tragical events it has been our task to record, soon after the death of Slanning and Fitz removed to Okehampton Park, another of her costly seats. It is probable she did this in the hope, by change of place, to find a change of mind. Be it as it may, she was mistaken, as, of all persons concerned in these events, though outwardly the most prosperous, she was inwardly the most wretched, for there lurked the worm that never dies, an evil conscience.

Death and misery had crowned the work of her revenge. They had gratified to the full the insatiable desires of malice and of pride. There was not a being left on whom to wreak the spite of her own unnatural feelings. Wanting an object for their activity in outward action, they now turned upon herself; and a punishment, that might have been numbered with those of Dante's hell, became hers; since she was doomed daily and hourly to re-act her own deeds in thought. Wealth afforded her

* Idem cædis erat nostræ, simul auctor et ultor :
Trux homicida mei, mox homicida sui,
Quemq; in me primum, mox in se condidit ensem
O ! nostrum summi judici arbitrium.

† A descendant of *this* Slanning (whose melancholy fate is recorded in the above epitaph), *also* named Sir Nicholas Slanning, was one of those gallant gentlemen who were called "the four wheels of Charles's wain." He fell near Bristol, whilst fighting by the side of Prince Rupert.

"The four wheels of Charles's wain,
Grenville, Godolphin, Trevanion, Slanning, slain."

‡ Edward A. Bray.

no consolation ; for her avarice, never satisfied, made her constantly desire more. Her youth and beauty gave her no comfort, for they faded before she had acquired one grace of mind to supply their loss.

She had dependants and servants out of number ; but she saw too plainly that fear and self-interest alone kept them with her. Her pride was humbled, as after the fatal events of Fitz-ford she was shunned by her equals and cursed by her inferiors. If she rode in the coach of her pomp she thought upon the night she had ridden in it for the purpose of gratifying her own evil designs. All things seemed to desert her except her hound ; and her infatuated fondness for the animal was, at times, strangely accompanied with aversion and disgust ; for, as if he also had conspired against her peace, he constantly appeared to her imagination, like the ghost of Banquo to Macbeth, as the remembrancer of blood and murder.

In this miserable state lived Lady Howard ; yet even to her was the mercy of Providence extended, since her years were continued beyond the usual term of human life ; doubtless to give her space for repentance. Whether she so employed the time allotted to her, or not, we must not presume to say. In her deportment, however, she showed no change ; but the heart must be judged alone by Him who sees its most hidden thoughts.

The memory of Lady Howard is, even at this remote distance of time, execrated by posterity ; and a wild legend respecting her, worthy the Hartz mountains, is to this day current amongst the elders in Tavistock. It avers that the coach, of which she was so proud, and in which she rode on the night she contrived the ruin of Sir John Fitz, may still be seen, amid the "glimpses of the moon," rattling through the streets of this town on its way to Okehampton Park, the seat at which she died. But the vehicle is now a coach of bones. Human skulls supply the place of those balls that once ornamented the four corners of its roof ; and Lady Howard rides in it a pale and sheeted spectre, as her skeleton hound runs before her, to bring nightly a blade of grass from Okehampton Park to the gateway of Fitz-ford ; a penance doomed to endure till the last blade of grass shall be plucked, when the world will be at an end.

The fate of Betsy Grimal also is only known by tradition. In the vicarage garden of Tavistock there stands, between two towers, a venerable and ivy-grown archway of Gothic structure, which once formed a part of the ancient abbey. It is here that

tradition asserts this cruel woman met her death, being murdered by one of her associates in a quarrel. Some stains on the walls of the winding steps are said to be those of her blood, and even to the present day this portion of the venerable pile is known by the name of Betsy Grimal's tower.

The fate of Standwich was remarkable. Notwithstanding he had once more been made prisoner, he again managed his escape by breaking from his guard, whilst they halted to refresh themselves, on leading him back to prison. In what place he afterwards concealed himself, or by what means he left England, is entirely unknown; but he was a man full of expedients, and gifted with great natural powers of mind, which, had they been turned to good purposes, would have handed down his name with honour to posterity. All that is known, or perhaps we should say, suspected of him, may be told in a few words.

An English exile, who had been one of the secret and intriguing enemies of Elizabeth—a man of melancholy habits and eccentric manners, arrived in Spain soon after the death of Mary Queen of Scots, and entered a monastery not far from Cadiz. He there voluntarily subjected himself to the severest austerities and penances of the Romish Church. These, it was believed; hastened his end; and some papers found concealed about his person, after death, gave birth to the surmise that the deceased monk was no other than the once celebrated and guilty George Standwich.

But, though Standwich escaped to die in a foreign land, it will be some satisfaction to the reader to know that Andrew Morton did not. From circumstances which we will not here state, a suspicion arose that he must have connived at, and even devised, the escape of Standwich from Lidford Castle. His disappearing, on the very night that rebel was retaken, confirmed these suspicions. Andrew Morton was sought for, taken, and shot dead upon the spot, whilst endeavouring to offer a violent resistance to the people sent out to seize him.

Lady Slanning, who was most truly an object of pity, after the death of her husband was again received in the kindest manner by the worthy and sorrowing Glanville. The full particulars respecting the secret of her birth (which Standwich had communicated to the Jew) Levi related to Glanville. For obvious reasons the venerable judge did not think proper to make these particulars public; and he extended his protection, in times so dangerous, towards Levi, and even towards the little

Benjamin. There might have been something of policy in this, as Glanville could not but be aware that the peace, and, in some measure, the good name, of Lady Slanning was materially concerned in securing the silence of the Jew.

It is probable, therefore, that the unhappy Margaret never knew to the full extent those circumstances; for, though Standwich had declared himself to be her father, he had carefully avoided naming her guilty mother, when he wrote, what may be called his confession, to his daughter.

If kindness, if the soothing care and attention of a friend, could have healed the wounds of a broken heart, Lady Slanning might have been comforted. But it was all in vain; the shaft had struck deep, and for ever after rankled in the wound. The dying countenance of Slanning, and the image of the yet more miserable fate of John Fitz—of Fitz who had possessed her earliest affections, were constantly before her sight. The remembrance was fixed in her mind by day, and haunted her pillow by night. She lost all enjoyment of society, the natural vivacity of her spirits forsook her, her eye grew dim, and her cheek daily became thinner and paler, till grief outstepped the natural course of time; and, though yet but in her youth, she pined gradually away, till death closed the scene. And not till she was sensible that her last hour approached did she draw from her finger a small turquoise ring, which she pressed to her lips ere she gave it to Glanville as a dying token, with these few words,—“Receive it; for the bond of life is now broken!”

That good man dropped the last tears that were shed over her remains, as he closed those eyes, now for ever set in death. Barnabas Ferule, who truly loved the Lady Slanning, having experienced many little acts of kindness, both to himself and to his children, from her hands, was a humble follower of her remains to the grave. Soon after, Glanville erected a tomb over the spot that contained her remains and those of her husband, in Bickleigh church. And Barnabas exercised all his latinity to produce that epitaph, which records so briefly this terrible history; but, as Glanville positively forbade him to introduce any notice of the early affection which once subsisted between the wife of Slanning and the man by whose hand he afterwards died, Barnabas felt so exceedingly mortified at being obliged to suppress what he deemed a most finished monody on their loves, that, not knowing what to do, he left out all mention of Lady Slanning in the epitaph, except her name and the date of her death.

Levi the Jew, whose necessities in the former part of his life, and a sense of the injuries he had received whilst first employed to improve the mining of Devon, had tempted him to connect himself with the outlaws and partizans of Standwich, nevertheless, afterwards greatly repented of these things ; and in acts of individual kindness and benevolence he showed a heart not unworthy of a Christian. He became wiser in his old age, and, assisted by the notice of Glanville, pursued an honest and thriving traffic, as a goldsmith, in the town of Plymouth, where he lived, after his removal from Tavistock, till the day of his death.

Most truly did he sorrow for the melancholy fate of Lady Slanning; and once, in his way to Plymouth, entered Bickleigh church, to visit the spot that contained her remains. He cast a sorrowing glance upon the tomb, and, as he turned aside his head to wipe away a tear that coursed down his cheek, he said, in a voice full of feeling, to his nephew who was with him, " Benjamin, I am an old man ; and, though I have seen many sad chances in this world, yet the fate of her who lies here was the saddest of them all. Lady Slanning was young, beautiful as the rose of Sharon, and pure as the lily of the valleys. But she is gone ! and though the flowers appear again on the earth, and the time of the singing-birds is come, yet she shall return no more, for in the grave there is no spring to renew the breath of life : yet peace be to the spirit of the departed ! Farewell to thee most lovely and beloved ! And do thou, Benjamin, be admonished, even by this silent tomb, to do at all times that which is right ; for there is a way that seemeth right, but the end thereof is death. Had George Standwich never quitted that true way, his daughter, may be, had not thus filled an untimely grave. Thy word, O God of Israel ! is established in truth ; thou hast said it, that the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children. And here is an example, not in the eternal condemnation, but in the most grievous temporal consequences of sin and transgression."

NOTES ON FITZ OF FITZ-FORD.

As I did not wish to injure the gradual development of my tale by *anticipation*, I forbore inserting in the General Preface the following particulars. But, as I think they may be of some interest to the reader, I give them as notes on the novel. They form a portion of one of my letters, respecting this part of Devonshire, that were addressed to the late lamented poet-laureate, Mr. Southey, and originally published by Mr. Murray, under the title of "Borders of the Tamar and Tavy."

"Kilworthy, once the splendid mansion of the Glanvilles, a family long distinguished in Devon, is situated about two miles distant from Tavistock. The house was built by them in the reign of Elizabeth. This structure partook of that combination of heavy and clumsy ornament common to the period, yet rendered imposing by the grandeur which characterized the original proportions of the building to which it was appended. . . . Kilworthy underwent considerable alterations in the reign of Charles the Second; and lastly, and still worse, in that of George the Third, when, nearly sixty years since, the front was entirely modernized. In a long passage of the house, as well as in one of its chambers, may still be seen a vast number of paintings on panel, representing in succession the arms, alliances, &c. of the family of Glanville, for many generations. The hall, though now but a vestige of what it once was, shows enough to indicate its former grandeur; it was originally lofty—it is now low, and divided by a partition. . . . The recesses still seen in the hall must have been a more modern construction, since neither these nor the gilded Corinthian capitals of the pilasters are older than the time of Charles the Second. . . . The gardens of Kilworthy, where slight traces of their ancient grandeur may even yet be seen, were on a scale suited to the place. They ran along the side of an elevated piece of ground to the west of the house, being entered through a pair of ample gates, on whose supporters ap-

peared, at the top of each, a formidable lion rampant, holding in his claws the *saltier or*, the cross of the Glanvilles, and frowning augustly upon all intruders. . . A noble avenue of old beech-trees, their trunks overgrown with moss, and affording the deepest shade, led on the way from the then principal road to the mansion, allowing the passenger here and there those peeps of landscape and of the Dartmoor heights between their trunks and branches always so welcome to the lover of the picturesque. These beech-trees still remain, venerable from time, and happily untouched by the axe. There are also some very aged ones of exceeding beauty, in what was once the park, where the red deer used to graze on the perpetual herbage this climate secures to our fields."

The most eminent of all the proprietors of Kilworthy was Judge Glanville, one of the Justices of the Common Pleas in 1598, and a native, as Prince says, in his "Worthlies of Devon," of "the famous town of Tavistock." The Judge married a lady whose maiden name was Skirret, and by her he had three sons and four daughters. Of one of the sons, and also one of the daughters, I shall have something more to say anon. After giving the Judge the highest character for learning, justice, and integrity, our worthy biographer says—"This learned person dying at Tavistock, July 27th, 1600, was interred in the parish church thereunto belonging, where is erected to his memory a very fair monument, so lively representing his person in his scarlet robes, that some at their first entrance into one of the doors there, against which it stands, have been surprised at the sight, supposing it had been living."

The effigy of Judge Glanville, thus lauded by Prince, is certainly a very superior work of art. There is so much character about the head and face that I have no doubt it was an excellent likeness. Mr. Bray tells me it so exactly corresponds with an old picture on panel, representing the Judge in his black cap and scarlet robes, that was for years in the possession of his late father, that it confirms the circumstance. The effigy is that of a corpulent man lying at full length on his side, the upper part of the body being raised, and the left arm resting on a cushion. The countenance and brows in particular exhibit those strong marks of intellectual superiority which ever distinguish a man of talent. As a whole, his head is striking and impressive, notwithstanding the injury it has sustained by the loss of a part of the nose; the hands have likewise been mutilated, as well as

many parts of the tomb. I have no doubt these injuries had their origin in the Civil wars, when Tavistock was, at one period, in a very disturbed state. In front of the Judge, but beneath the figure, kneels in a praying attitude the effigy of Dame Glanville. She is also noseless; but truly estimating her by what remains of her face, one would be led to fancy her husband had made, as many other wise men have done, rather an unfortunate choice in his partner for life. The forehead is low and mean, and the whole expression of the countenance conveys a strong idea of a proud, cross, disagreeable, woman. I must now speak of the traditions of this neighbourhood in respect to Judge Glanville, on which I grounded my Romance. I am the more anxious to do so, because, since the original publication of *Fitz of Fitz-Ford*, many things in it, purely fictions of my own, are now dignified into traditions of Tavistock! To state, therefore, what I am now about to do, will for ever set the matter at rest, and no false traditions can hereafter arise.

One day in the year 1827, when my husband had requested me to look over some of his papers relating to Tavistock, I found the copy of a letter addressed by Mr. Bray to the late Mr. Samuel Lysons, the author of the "Magna Britannia," of which the "Devonshire" forms a part. It appeared that Mr. Lysons had requested Mr. Bray to give him some information respecting Tavistock. This he did in the letter, bearing date January 16th, 1819, and after stating that Judge Glanville built Kilworthy, &c., my husband thus proceeded to relate the traditional story.

"The Judge's daughter was attached to George Standwich, a young man of Tavistock, lieutenant of a man-of-war, whose letters (the father disapproving of the attachment) were intercepted. An old miser of Plymouth, of the name of Page, wishing to have an heir to disappoint his relations, who, perhaps, were too confident in calculating upon sharing his wealth, availed himself of this apparent neglect of the young sailor, and, settling on her a good jointure, obtained her hand. She took with her a maid-servant from Tavistock, but her husband was so penurious that he dismissed all the other servants, and caused his wife and her maid to do all the work themselves. On an interview subsequently taking place between her and Standwich, she accused him of neglecting to write to her, and then discovered that his letters had been intercepted. The maid advised them to get rid of the old gentleman, and Standwich at length, with great reluctance, consented to their putting an end to him. Page lived in

what is now the Mayoralty-house at Plymouth, and a woman who lived opposite, hearing at night some sand thrown against a window, thinking it was her own, arose, and looking out, saw a young gentleman near Page's window, and heard him say—'For God's sake, stay your hand.' A female replied—'Tis too late, the deed is done.' On the following morning it was given out that Page had died suddenly in the night, and as soon as possible he was buried. On the testimony, however, of his neighbour, the body was taken up again, and it appearing that he had been strangled—his wife, Standwich, and the maid, were tried and executed. It is current among the common people here, that *Judge Glanville, her own father, pronounced her sentence.*"

On reading this dismal story in Mr. Bray's letter, it instantly struck me, that with some alterations, additions, &c. it might be made a groundwork for the plot of a romance, that would admit descriptive scenes, &c. of this town and neighbourhood. And the more I thought of it the more I felt desirous to execute the plan I had formed. At the same time it struck me that, if I could unite with it a second plot, founded on the true story of Sir John Fitz (recorded by Prince), it would heighten the interest, and increase the opportunities that would occur for scenes of a dramatic character. I next turned to (what I shall soon give) the story of Sir John Fitz, and saw it would do.

That of old Page required, I thought, considerable alteration. It would make the tale too horrible, too much of the raw-head and bloody-bones order, to have the wife kill her husband in the progress of the piece. I determined, therefore, that the deed should have been done years before the opening of the narrative, and that two of the parties concerned should have escaped immediate justice (Standwich and the maid), and that the miserable consequences of their crimes, both to themselves and others, should form the groundwork of my story, as those consequences might arise in the course of the work. I had some doubt as to the way in which I should draw the character of the maid, who had urged on the wife of Page to commit the murder. That she must be very wicked was a thing of course; but a common serving damsel would hardly suit, with dramatic effect, in the particular kind of scenes I wished to represent. She ought to be raised something above the common order, so that it would not be incongruous to make her speak English instead of Devonshire. She ought, I fancied, to have a genius for wickedness;

and to carry about her something to excite terror, as well as abhorrence. What name to call her was also another point. "Call her," said Mr. Bray, "Betsy Grimal; that name is formidable enough for any such character as you wish to draw; and, moreover, Betsy Grimal is not unknown to tradition; though all that is told of her is, that she, instead of committing a murder, was herself murdered. She is said to have been killed by a soldier on the spiral stairs of the tower flanking the old archway in our garden. Hence that tower bears her name. The stains on the wall, called her blood, used sadly to frighten me when I was a child."

It was agreed that Betsy Grimal was, therefore, to become the guilty associate and attendant of Page's wife, and to play a busy and prominent part in the story. And as I wished as much as possible to combine every fragment of tradition, or to derive some hint from it, that would suggest incident and character, even the slightest legend of old times was not to be neglected. It struck me that I could make Lady Howard into a character. All I knew of her was, that she bore the reputation of having been hard-hearted in her lifetime; that for some crime she had committed (nobody knew what), she was said to be doomed to run in the shape of a hound from the gateway of Fitz-ford to Okehampton Park, between the hours of midnight and cock-crowing, and to return with a single blade of grass in her mouth whence she started; and this she was to do till every blade was picked, when the world would be at an end.

Dr. Jago, the clergyman of Milton Abbot, however, told me, that occasionally she was said to ride in a coach of bones up the West-street, Tavistock, towards the Moor; and an old man of this place told a friend of mine the same story, only adding that "he had seen her scores of times!" A lady also, who was once a resident here, and whom I met in company, assured me that, happening many years before to pass the old gateway at Fitz-ford, as the church-clock struck twelve, in returning from a party, she had herself seen the hound start! Now, I verily believe the lady told truth; for my husband's father, many years ago, rented Fitz-ford—it was the residence of his hind or bailiff, and there the late Mr. Bray used to keep a pack of hounds; it is, therefore, nothing improbable, that one of them might have slipped the kennel, and ran out as the church-clock struck twelve, and so personated, in the eyes of imagination, the terrific spectre of the old tale. My husband can remember that, when a boy, it

was a common saying with the gentry at a party—"Come, it is growing late, let us begone, or we shall meet Lady Howard, as she starts from Fitz-ford."

The above anecdotes were all I knew about her, when I determined to make her take a part in my story; but the hound, the gateway, and the coach of bones, were all fine hints for imagination to work upon. I walked down to Fitz-ford with Mr. Bray, and reconnoitred the spot; and there, such is the bewitching power of locality, all seemed to rush at once into my mind. The plot was formed with ease; and I went home determined to connect the adventure of Fitz and Slanning, under the gateway, with Lady Howard; to give her a real hound, or bloodhound, instead of turning her into one; and then the coach of bones, and her riding in it after death, might be made a legend, in consequence of a great crime, which by an evil passion she had been led to determine on committing whilst riding in her own coach, in all her pride, to the house of the person she had it in view to betray to ruin here on earth. This rude sketch of a plot was soon worked into shape, and committed to paper. Mr. Bray named the hound Redfang, as a significant appellative for a dog whose instinct was to become the agency in assisting to bring about the catastrophe.

The character of Levi the Jew was suggested by our acquaintance with a most honest Israelite—a German, Mr. Rosenthal, who used to come to the vicarage to teach Mr. Bray Hebrew. The terms of instruction he left to him; and when the time came for payment he actually wanted to return Mr. Bray some part of the money, insisting that he ought not to be paid so much for his lessons. There was so much mildness, feeling, and gratitude about poor Rosenthal, that I endeavoured minutely to observe him, and to sketch him in Levi, as a very different sort of character to that we generally expect to find in a Jew. I believe I have here stated every fragment of tradition that suggested to me any name, character, or incident in the tale, except the real story of Fitz, which, as it is the principal, and the one after which I called the work, I here give exactly as I found it in Prince's "Worthies of Devon."

"John Fitz, of Fitz-ford, esquire, was in his time a very eminent counsellor at law; in demonstration thereof is a large volume he is said to have left behind him in manuscript, called 'Fitz his Reports.' I think it was never printed, and whether yet in being I know not. He was also preferred in his time to the

honour and trust of being high-sheriff of the county of Devon, an. 23d, some say 25th, of Queen Elizabeth's reign. He married Mary, daughter of Sir John Sydenham, of Brinton, in Somersetshire, but was very unfortunate in his issue, of which there is a remarkable story. Mr. Fitz, being a curious as well as a learned person, had been prying into the secrets of astrology; his lady being with child, he would needs be inquiring into the fortunes of her burthen before she was delivered, who being just ready to fall into travail, he erected a scheme to calculate the matter; and, as it often falls out in such unjustifiable curiosities, finding at that time a very unlucky position of the heavens, he desired the midwife, if possible, to hinder the birth but one hour, which not being to be done, he declared that the child would come to an unhappy end, and undo his family. And it fell out accordingly; for that birth proving a son, though afterwards knighted by the name of Sir John Fitz of Fitz-ford, yet having first slain Sir Nicholas Slanning, of this county, knight, and after that one or two more, he fell upon his own sword and destroyed himself."

In a notice respecting the family of Slanning, Prince thus states the circumstances. "This gentleman came to an untimely end, being slain in a quarrel that happened between him and Sir John Fitz, near Tavistock, in this county. The matter it seems was likely to have been composed, but the villain, Fitz's man, twitting his master with a 'What, play child's play; come to fight, and now put up your sword!' made him draw again, and Slanning's foot, in stepping back (having his spurs on), hitching in the ground, was there unfortunately and foully killed; whereupon Sir John Fitz, by the interest of his friends, sued out his pardon soon after this happened, which was in 1590. But, although Queen Elizabeth was pleased to forgive him, Slanning's widow would not; but brought her appeal, and obtained a verdict against Sir John for damages, who thereupon was forced to comply with her, by granting some part of his estate to her and her family, who are still in possession of it.

"After this," continues Prince, "as one sin became (as oftentimes it doth) the punishment of another, Sir John was so unhappy to be guilty of a second murder; and thereupon flying from his county (though not from his own guilty conscience), so far as Salisbury, or thereabouts, in his way to London, to sue out a second pardon, hearing somebody about his chamber-door early in the morning, and fearing it had been officers come to appre-

hend him, by mistake, in the dark, he slew one of the house come to wake him, as he desired, in order to his journey. When the lights came that made him sensible of the horrid and atrocious fact which he had afresh committed, overwhelmed with sorrow and despair he fell upon his own sword and slew himself. Unto which passage that tetrastick formerly found upon this monument, now nearly expunged by the finger of Time, doth plainly relate; where Sir Nicholas Slanning, by an apostrophe, speaketh of Fitz." Then follows the Latin epitaph given in the romance.

The first part of the above melancholy tale I followed closely in my work, and represented, as the reader has seen, the old lawyer engaged in his astrological pursuits, and alarmed for the fate he had so darkly predicted respecting his only son. The latter part was too full of horrors; and, therefore, blending fiction with truth, I ventured to create a cause for the quarrel between Slanning and Sir John Fitz that should be connected with the leading incidents of the story even from the opening; and, instead of John Fitz killing three persons, I thought one would be quite enough, and so concluded much according to the real narrative. Tradition marks the old gateway of Fitz-ford as the probable scene of the fatal duel, and the spot where Slanning fell.

Respecting Sir John, or "old Page," I have another note to add. I was informed by the late Mr. Hughes of Tavistock (who was well acquainted with many local interesting stories and traditions) that he was an eminent merchant in his day, commonly called "wealthy Page." He lived in Woolster-street, Plymouth, in the house since known by the name of the Mayoralty-house. It stood untouched till the rebuilding of the Guildhall, when it was taken down. The old house was long an object of curiosity, on account of the atrocious murder there committed. Mr. Hughes likewise told me that some years ago, previous to the repairs of St. Andrew's church, Plymouth, Page's coffin was discovered on breaking the ground, near the communion-table, for the interment of a lady named Lovell. The inscription on the coffin proved it to contain the body of the "wealthy Page." It was opened; the remains were found in a remarkably perfect state, but crumbled to dust on being exposed to the air. So great was the curiosity of the populace that during several days hundreds pressed in to gratify it, and every relic that could be stolen, if but a nail from the coffin, was carried off.

There is no authority but that of tradition in support of the

assertion that the wife of Page was one of the daughters of Judge Glanville, and received sentence of death from the lips of her own father. Supposing the story to be true, Prince has carefully suppressed it. I am, however, disposed to think it is not true, as my late venerable friend, our Devonshire historian, the Rev. Richard Polwhele of Polwhele, Cornwall (descended from the Judge, by the marriage of his daughter Dionysia with a Polwhele), wrote me word, "That, though he had heard his grandmother tell the story of Glanville passing the sentence on his own child, it was not, even in her time, considered true."

Of Frank Glanville, one of the sons of the Judge, who is mentioned in the novel, so interesting a tale is told that, although a little longer than I could wish for a note, I cannot resist the desire I feel to give it. I extract it from the letters before mentioned, which I addressed to Mr. Southey.

"Judge Glanville, the possessor of that fair estate of Kilworthy, so often spoken of in this letter, intended to settle it on his son Francis, as the elder born, who was to bear the honours of his house, and to convey them unsullied to his posterity—but Francis disappointed his hopes. He proved idle and vicious; and, like the Prodigal in the Gospel, would leave his father's house to herd among swine, for such are the low and the wicked. Seeing there was no prospect of his amendment, the Judge gave the inheritance of the elder to the younger born, and settled his estate on John, afterwards Serjeant Glanville.

"Francis, on his father's death, finding those threats which had been occasionally held out to induce him to reform his wild career were fully executed (for he had never really believed them to be other than threats), was overcome with grief and dismay. He was the elder born—the natural heritor of the estate; and he, like Esau, had sold his birthright for dishonour. This reflection, and the thought that his father had died in too just anger towards him, so wrought on a mind in which there lay hid strong, though hitherto perverted feelings, that he became melancholy. Riot could no longer soothe the pangs of conscience, and when, like the Prodigal, all was gone, instead of giving himself up to utter despair, he wisely returned to God, as to an offended and only Father—his earthly parent being alike removed either from his sorrows or his repentance. Good resolutions are the guides to virtue, but practice is the path; and that must be followed with an unwearied step. Frank Glanville, having once set his foot in the way, did not turn back; and so

steadily did he advance in his progress on the right road, that what his father could never do with him whilst he lived (and the spendthrift entertained the expectation of being his heir) he now did for himself, when he was little better than an outcast from his early home; his life became completely changed.

"Sir John Glanville, his younger brother (a native of Tavistock, a most learned lawyer, and excellent man), wishing to prove him before he gave him better countenance, for some time left him to himself, till he felt convinced his brother's penitence was as lasting as it was sincere; he then sent and invited him to be present at a feast that he purposed making for his friends in the halls of Kilworthy. The most sumptuous preparations were made; the banquet was set forth with all the liberal hospitality of the time; the guests assembled were numerous and honourable, and music sounded through the halls its varied and most enlivening notes.

"Sir John Glanville took the repentant prodigal by the hand, seated him at the table, and after many dishes had been served, ordered one that was covered to be set before his brother Francis; and then, with a cheerful countenance, he bade him raise the cover. Francis did so. All present were surprised on seeing that the dish contained nothing but written parchments; whereupon Sir John Glanville, wishing all his friends to know the respect in which he now held his repentant brother, and at the same time, with that true generosity which seeks to lighten the obligation it confers by lessening its merit, told Francis, and those who were assembled, that what he now did was only the same act that he felt assured would have been performed by his father, could he have lived to witness the happy change which they all knew had taken place in his eldest son; therefore, as in honour bound, he freely restored to him the whole estate.

"The scene that followed may be readily imagined; the 'lost that was found' fell on his brother's neck, and wept aloud; and if there was one heart in that assembly more than all the rest rejoicing in the general joy it was the heart of the generous, the noble, the just brother, who now most truly felt the force of these words of the Lord of Life—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." "



Mrs. Bray's Novels and Romances.

HISTORICAL ROMANCES.

THE WHITE HOODS.
DE FOIX.

THE PROTESTANT.
THE TALBA.

ROMANCES OF THE WEST.

FITZ OF FITZ FORD
WARLEIGH.
COURTENAY OF WAL-
REDDON.

TRELAWNY OF TRE-
LAWNE.
HENRY DE POMEROY.
HARTLAND FOREST,
AND ROSETEAGUE.

MISCELLANEOUS TALES.

TRIALS OF THE HEART.
A FATHER'S CURSE, AND A DAUGHTER'S
SACRIFICE.



the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The 1970s were characterized by a strong emphasis on the environment and social justice. The 1980s saw a shift towards economic growth and individualism. The 1990s were marked by a focus on technology and globalization.

The 1970s were a time of significant social and environmental change. The environmental movement gained momentum, leading to the passage of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. The civil rights movement also continued to be a major force in American society.

The 1980s were a decade of economic growth and individualism. The Reagan Revolution emphasized free-market economics and a smaller federal government. The AIDS crisis and the Iran-Iraq war were also major events of this decade.

The 1990s were a decade of technological advancement and globalization. The Internet became a major part of daily life, and the World Trade Organization was established. The end of the Cold War and the start of the Clinton administration were also significant events.

The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s were all decades of significant change and progress. Each decade had its own unique challenges and achievements.

